



# Malvern East Group

MEG Supports **PLANNING BACKLASH**

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## MEG NEWSLETTER.... NOV./DEC. 2019

### From the Convenor's Desk

What with all the news about developer contributions and political parties and councillors and re-zoning of land and our erstwhile Planning Minister vowing to fill in the middle suburbs with endless 'look alike' boutique developments ...(except for the high-rise stuff, they're all "boutique' developments)....and, of course, the appalling cladding issue, I hardly know where to start this newsletter.

There is, too, lots of news on the local front.....animals in the shops, 2020 Council election, more building at Chadstone, endless plans at Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust but no action, Percy's Park surviving (for the moment) as a real park with trees and real grass.... and some information about **your rates at work.**

It's a smorgasbord!

### The headlines from The Age about IBAC's investigations into Casey Council

DEVELOPER'S BIG ROLE IN CARVING UP GREEN WEDGE

DEVELOPER BANKROLLS LABOR CAMPAIGNS

DEVELOPER PAID TWO COUNCILLORS \$1.2 MILLION, CORRUPTION PROBE HEARS

DEVELOPER ADMITS DEAL LOOKS CORRUPT (So help us!)

DEVELOPER CULTIVATED MPs WITH GIFTS: IBAC

DEVELOPER DONATED TO SIX MPs

TAPES REVEAL DEVELOPER'S LEGAL THREAT TO SILENCE PAPER

Apparently the re-zoning of land being investigated by IBAC deals with the rezoning of "a swathe of Cranbourne West industrial land to residential."

Hidden away on P.9 of The Age Nov. 29 is a snippet referring to a previous re-zoning in Cranbourne South from agricultural land to residential. "The move to rezone the land was signed off in 2012 by former Liberal planning minister Matthew Guy, as part of process known as "logical inclusions." What on earth defines a **logical inclusion**? Any bit of vacant land where food is grown??

In the The Age on Dec.4 the article refers to the industrial land in Cranbourne West...."Casey Councillor Geoff Ablett instructed a residents group **secretly funded by developer John Woodman** " to put together a massive campaign' against Labor if the party's Cranbourne candidate didn't support a bid to rezone the land."

A RESIDENTS GROUP SECRETLY FUNDED BY A DEVELOPER???

It appears from the records shown to IBAC that *“Mr. Woodman and his associates spent \$193,000”* on that group. The group is referred to as *“the creature of developers.”* We asked Mary Drost to check the Planning Backlash list of residents’ groups and Save Cranbourne West Residents Action Group is not on our list...thankfully! What can we say about this saga? Cranbourne is certainly being “done over” by developers, councillors, political parties and a residents’ group! **And there’s much more to come!** Planning Minister Richard Wynne is yet to decide whether to sign off on the re-zoning of that land at Cranbourne West.....or not!! On Dec. 7 Royce Millar and Ben Schneider reported that Megan Schultz (an offsider of John Woodman) told IBAC that *“Mr. Wynne had been regarded as unfriendly to the development industry and favouring community groups and public interest.”* WELL, WELL!! MEG thinks she’s got it wrong there. With Andrews, Pakula, Pallas and other Labor Party politicians named as being more than friendly to John Woodman’s wishes and Mr. Wynne refusing to release his Department’s briefings on this issue and the release of a recording *“of Woodman in which he warned he had enough “dirt” to bury Labor”* it is a fascinating dilemma facing Mr. Wynne and one over which MEG hopes he will lose lots of sleep! On Dec.14 is reported in The Age that *“sweeping reforms are likely to flow from the Casey scandal, including local councillors being banned from making decisions on individual planning applications.”* If that happens it follows that residents will be excluded too!

#### **And the same Planning Minister is being taken to the Supreme Court by a developer**

The Age Nov.20 *“Bensons Property Group has filed a writ against Victorian Minister for Planning Richard Wynne in a bid to have to have a C145 Amendment to the Maribyrong Planning Scheme set aside on the grounds it was “invalid” and the Minister was acting beyond his powers.”* The Amendment increases the levies on Bensons Footscray apartment project from \$400,000 to \$3 million. Planning lawyer Tom Bacon said that if Bensons is successful *“it would be bad news for the council which is dependent on that revenue to fund its infrastructure and projects.”*

#### **And the same Planning Minister has fallen out of favour with 3 Councils**

The Age Dec. 6 *“The \$15.8 billion North East Link has won the Planning Minister’ tick of approval, after he dismissed the key findings of an independent panel that had spent months assessing the project’s effects on the environment.”* The road will have an adverse impact on the environment, an adverse impact on 53 hectares of ‘open space’ of which 18 hectares will be lost, 800 jobs will be lost and **26,000 trees will be destroyed.** Banyule, Whitehorse and Boroondara Councils are considering a Supreme Court appeal. A letter-writer to The Age on Dec.7 said, *“Why bother appointing a North East Link inquiry and advisory committee and having an eight week long hearing if Planning Minister Richard Wynne does not heed the resulting recommendations.”*

#### **Push to pick ten regional super cities**

The Age Nov. 26 For years MEG has promoted the notion of “decentralisation.” Melbourne is one city. It is NOT Victoria. The Government is a STATE Government not a Melbourne Government. MEG has, in a number of submissions, urged the Government to spend money on infrastructure in **the State.** We have suggested “planting a city.” Canberra is a “planted city.” A government could do that again. Alas, our pleas have fallen on deaf ears. When we saw this article on Nov.26 we thought (just for a moment)

that someone had heard us. No, it's not State Government. Our State Government never hears us. This is a Federal Government initiative apparently forced on them by "*Australia's top business lobby...Business Council of Australia.*" Its CEO says the cities chosen should be based on "*having gateway infrastructure, such as an airport or major transport routes, two successful industries, strategic importance, proximity or major power grids, a university and a TAFE, and available housing and health services.*" We have to start SOMEWHERE.

(A thought....this might save Cranbourne from that cashed up group of residents!!!)

### **Cladding issue**

Builders want a State Government amnesty for builders to be able to report potentially flammable cladding without fear of prosecution.

Noel Towell in The Age on Nov.27 said, "*More than 1200 buildings with risky level of flammable cladding are included on the state government's list—**which is not publicly available**---but the association believes there are potentially many more buildings around Victoria that could be dangerous.*"

The Master Builders Association wants a 'moratorium' on prosecutions of builders who self-report. Mr. Wynne has a lukewarm view of this proposal. State Government has committed \$600 million for removal of the combustible material. **Your taxes at work!**

### **Melbourne can fit in more people.**

The Age Nov.29 From a senior principal planner at Tract Consultants...just a few gems! "*Melbourne is seeing rapid growth in the inner city and outer suburbs, but less in the liveable middle suburbs.*" (This is where we hang our heads in shame!) "*These places are blessed with services and facilities and constitute a key part of the **missing middle** of Melbourne's development. There are valid reasons to limit growth in parts of these suburbs, but there remains vast areas that can accommodate more people in places that are already liveable **and the Victorian Planning Authority is working on just this.***"

This senior principal town planner doesn't mention what the valid reasons are for limiting growth in our areas but we might let him know that we are, for the moment, operating as the lungs of the city....and that will continue if only developers and State Government and councils would stop chopping down trees! What maniacs support the notion of destroying the good parts of Melbourne? It's a huge shame that these people....like the Victorian Planning Authority....don't turn their minds to **developing Victoria** and leave the 'middle suburbs' alone. After all, it is a **Victorian Planning Authority** not a **Melbourne Planning Authority**.

### **Solar panels and planning conditions**

We have all at some time been subjected to endless calls and texts urging us to buy solar panels...whether we already have them or not. We've been offered Government handouts to install them. We've been told at length about the benefits to the environment BUT we haven't been told that when/if a dual occ. or an extension or...worse....a 'boutique' development is built near us ...(*the middle suburbs must be filled up!*)...and our solar panels are overshadowed to the extent that their usefulness is limited, there is no **rule** that can be used to stop the over-shadowing. In The Age on Nov. 17 RMIT "*associate professor of urban planning Joe Hurley said these clashes would become more common **as Melbourne grows.***" He said that an amendment introduced in 2018 says that "*there needs to be a reasonable approach taken to protect that infrastructure.*" Alas, no-one seems able to

define that word **reasonable**. Have you ever noticed how often planning authorities use that word? In our experience what is reasonable for a developer is almost inevitably unreasonable for nearby residents.

### **McMansions falling out of favour**

The Age...Nov. 11 *“Free-standing houses are now the smallest they have been in 17 years as part of an accelerating trend that is placing pressure on struggling property developers, builders and retailers.”* (MEG has not noticed this!) Apparently the most recent CommSec report shows that the average size of a new house is down 1.3% on last year. The report also shows *“demand for new housing in outer suburb city developments is falling....”* *“Angela Lillicrap, economist at the Housing Industry Association, said there were some encouraging signs that the worst may be over for struggling developers and builders.”* (An unfortunate surname!) Well, that’s a relief! We don’t want to see any developers actually struggling!

### **LOCAL NEWS**

#### **\$4 million from Federal Government for controversial ‘stadium in a park.’**

In November 2019, blithely pre-empting a Supreme Court decision the Member for Higgins and the Deputy Prime Minister announced AGAIN this donation from the taxpayers toward the controversial “stadium in a park.” On November 12, Stonnington’s CEO said, *“We recognise the concerns of some residents abutting Percy Treyvaud Memorial Park regarding the project and will continue open communication in the lead-up to the Supreme Court case.....”*

MEG would like the CEO (and everyone else) to know that it is not just the residents whose homes abut the park who oppose the building of “a stadium in a park.” It is all the people who do not want to see 150 trees and shrubs (including 70 significant trees) destroyed. The CEO and the Federal Government are apparently unaware of the pollution-absorbing qualities of trees, their value in combatting the ‘heat island effect’ and their value in providing shade. We don’t care much about the stadium BUT we do care about the wanton destruction of trees in order to build the wretched thing. Clearly many in authority don’t give a brass razoo about tree destruction.

By the way, we noted in the recent Stonnington News that the Mayor endorses Council’s plan to plant more trees and that he wants look out from the Malvern Town Hall clocktower *to a sea of green*. \_We’re a little bewildered! Didn’t the Mayor vote to destroy the trees at Percy’s Park?

#### **Chadstone Shopping Centre**

H.S. Nov.1 *“doors officially opened on the \$130 million luxury hotel at Chadstone.....”* In our midst we now have 12 storeys, 250 rooms comprising the only 5 star hotel outside the CBD with views across Pt. Phillip Bay AND Melbourne’s skyline.....AND the interior is all PINK, BRASS and VELVET.....too tasteful for words!

**And there’s more building proposed at CSC...(The Age..Dec3).....\$685 million development proposed at Chadstone....more levels on 2 car parks AND a 9 storey office development on the eastern side. Vicinity needs *“a green light from Council and from the half-owner billionaire shopping centre magnate John Gandel.”* It is rumoured that there just might be residential apartments in the offing as well. A resident (only one??) says that *“ever-increasing traffic was making access almost impossible.....gridlocked roads for kilometres in***

*all directions...."* That was on Black Friday and the residents can now anticipate the excitement of Christmas!

The resident added that *"community consultation will be the usual sham of glossy flyers and false promises."* Gosh! A cynical resident!

***(Later in December....well Vicinity must have got the green light from the billionaire because the documents are on Council's Planning Register. Only one green light to go!)***

### **At the western end of Stonnington**

On Dec. 1 Prahran Square (Cato St.) was officially opened. *"Its advocates say the public square and 2 storeys of underground parking will revitalise the struggling Chapel St. precinct and provide one of the most significant additions to public open space in inner-city Melbourne."*

People are calling it "a concrete jungle" and "Isolation Square."

"One local architect stated that *"the terraced seating has created a stadium like structure with a tall blank wall that turns its back on surrounding streets."* ( Age ..Nov.30)

**A STADIUM!! THAT'S WHAT IS WANTED! NO NEED NOW TO DESTROY PERCY'S PARK!!**

There is a "forest walk" in the 'square' but the trees are only saplings and it will take about 15 years for them to actually start doing what trees do. There's also a "sensory garden" below the palm trees. There are retail tenancies ....(just what Chapel St. needs)....and a water fountain for the children! All of this for a mere \$64 million! **Your rates at work!** Traders in Cato St. *"are planning a class action against the council to compensate them for crippling losses caused by nearly two years of construction."* **More of your rates at work!**

### **Also at the western end of Stonnington**

This popped up on a Facebook page dated October 20.

*"The General Manager of Chapel St. Precinct, 'Chrissie Mauss, would like to thank the Campaign Ambassadors Gold's 104 3'3 Christian O'Connell ... (MEG has no idea who or what this is!)... Crs. Mayor Steve. Stefanopoulos, Cr. Melina Sehr and Cr.Jami Klisaris "Their bold move for Chapel St. Precinct to become the first and largest pet-friendly destination has already delivered increased shopper foot traffic since its launch 3 weeks ago. You can see people getting their hair done with their dog on their lap, people going to the bank with their pooch, JB Hi Fi, at galleries and even buying lingerie with their kitty cat."*

MEG was tempted to correct the grammar but was too appalled at the thought of trying on lingerie with a CAT around. If/when you go to Chapel St. avoid the "PAW-ON-THE-DOOR" if you don't fancy mixing with cats or dogs...OR ...with **any** animal with paws!

### **Caulfield Racecourse Reserve Trust**

MEG has 2 representatives at meetings held by the Trust...Geoff Westcott and Andrew Dixon. Stonnington Council staff representative meets with the representatives from the MRC and Glen Eira Council to discuss what's **'gunna'** happen...but not just yet! The main point in Geoff's report of the meeting on Nov. 18 was, "The violins are playing....." That means there are lots of plans but no action! Andrew will write a report after the first meeting in 2020. Glen Eira Residents Association sent MEG a report which finished up with this comment..... *"still fiddling around the edges with no need to do something/anything NOW. Still coming up with piddling ideas rather than looking at what they could actually achieve short term and long term."* (Thanks GERA!)

### **Meanwhile.....V.P.A and the Caulfield Station Precinct**

This Precinct covers the area of Monash University, the Plaza, the station, the Racecourse Reserve, all the land between Normanby Rd, Kambrook Rd. and Station St. Between Normanby Rd. and Station St. you may have seen the grey, soulless, treeless high-rise buildings appearing. That entire area will be covered in that sort of stuff with a shopping centre in the middle. All the trees in Smith St. will go and a 20 storey skyscraper is proposed for the site known as 'The Triangle' where the car park is.....and the VPA wanted to know on November 7/2019 what we think about it!

Hidden away on P.12 of one of the expensive handouts was a section called.. WHAT WE HEARD and the final point was, "***Overwhelmingly there was support for the Reserve to be opened up for more civic and community uses in addition to supporting its historic use for horse racing.***"

### **Council elections ...October 2020**

Council Notice Paper....Nov. 18....Item 10. Election of Councillors will take place On Saturday October 24. Council will enter "caretaker' mode from "12 noon Thursday 22 September until 6 p.m. on Saturday 24 October 2020, inclusive."

MEG has run a Forum for Council Candidates prior to previous council elections. The newly formed 'Stonnington Ratepayers' has expressed a wish to run the Forum in 2020 and we are delighted to abdicate that role. MEG thinks it should be jointly run by residents' groups across the municipality.

### **More of your rates at work...just for Christmas!**

Leader.. Dec.10 "*Stonnington Council is one of the biggest spenders in Melbourne for Christmas decorations splashing \$300,000 this year.*" Ratepayers shouldn't feel despondent about that because "*it's down \$75,000 on last year when it had extra production costs.*" This year Borondarra takes the prize for spending the most on decorations....a massive \$314,000. Nearby Monash Council only spent \$78,000.

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

**39 Clarence St.** Pt. dem. bldg. & works to existing dwelling in an NCO.

**7A Isabella St. Malvern** 3 storey Medical Centre. Recommendation to Grant a Permit by Pl. Dept. Refusal to Grant a Permit ...Council Mtg. Nov.18.

**50 Clarence St.** Pt. dem. bldg. & wks to existing dwelling in an NCO.

**973 Dandenong Rd.** Use & dev. of a 4 storey bldg. for student accomm. with 61 beds.

**34 Chanak St.** Ext. of dwelling on a lot less than 500 sq.m.

**20 Coonil Dr. Malvern** Pt. dem. 2 storey addn, swimming pool.

**136-138 Darling Rd.** 4 townhouse residential dev.

**54 Wheatland Rd. Malvern** Appeal against Council's conditions. VCAT Feb. 21/2020

**34 Armadale St.** 3 storeys, 13 apts. (3 more than the last application that was defeated!)

**24 Hughes St.** Construction of 2 storey dwelling on a lot in NCO.