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MEG Newsletter...September/October 2014

From the Convenor's Desk

As usual I wondered where to start our newsletter and I decided that I would use the words of Barry Humphreys printed in Spectrum (Age Oct.11/14)...

*"I've been a witness to the destruction of Melbourne. It started in the '50s and continues to this day. Anything that was any good was pulled down. Collins St, you won't believe this, was once a beautiful street, a monument to Melbourne's prosperity, **and now it's a monument to Melbourne's greed.** The developer is king here."*

He commented on Docklands. *"My idea of hell."*

In Spectrum (Age Oct.4) Monica Dux called Docklands *"a bleak depressing monument to missed opportunity where greedy developers were allowed to run rampant without any thought for the people who would actually live there."* She called it "a catastrophe" and let us not forget that Stonnington has its very own catastrophe in the Forrest Hill Precinct.

MEG Membership

If you haven't renewed your membership we remind you that the massive sum of \$5 was due on July 1/14. Many thanks to those who make donations and we remind everyone that at the end of the year we keep our Membership List up-to date- by deleting the names of those who haven't renewed.

Close Parallels with the Greed of the 1880's

From a letter by David Beardsell to the Age on Oct.3..."*The 1880's in Victoria were largely driven by land speculation and the building of useless public and private infrastructure such as the Outer and Inner Circle railways that ran from Oakleigh to North Melbourne. This scenario closely parallels what is happening today where the Victorian economy is partly driven by rampant, greedy and unproductive property speculation."* Sound familiar?

Cable Cars to Cope with Traffic Woes

The Age July 26...."*soon cable cars could be strung across some of Africa's most chaotic and traffic-clogged cities (sound familiar?) taking thousands of commuters to work in just a fraction of the time they now spend."*

Cable car networks already exist in Venezuela, Colombia, Rio de Janeiro, Ankara, Algeria and the world's biggest network is in Bolivia. An Austrian cable car firm is working with urban planners worldwide. (We don't think they're working here!) Cities in the above list don't have enough money for railways and cable cars *"use little energy and produce little pollution and do not need existing ground infrastructure to be ripped up or land in crowded cities to be appropriated.*

Gosh...we could even have them linked to the airport!

Planning Disputes at VCAT take a fall as prices rises

We've told you previously about the price hike at VCAT for appealing a Council decision. It's risen for residents as well as for applicants to the extent that residents are virtually locked out of the process unless they take part as an objector (with Council) to a proposal. For you to appeal against a Council decision now the cost is close to \$1000. The Attorney General feels quite justified in this attempt to lock us out of the system. He says, " *This is quite appropriate because in such cases the objector is seeking to overturn a decision that has been made by elected local community representatives.*" **What absolute twaddle!**

Clearly Mr. Clark is quite unaware that the majority of planning decisions are made under delegation by unelected Council employees of the Planning Dept. If you look at Council Notice Papers you will see that very few Planning Applications are on the agenda and we would venture to say that in general Councillors are completely unaware of the endless applications in their Wards.

If you are an objector to **any** such application ask your Councillor to 'call it up' and start making decisions that their constituents request.

Auditor General's Report on Caulfield Racecourse Reserve

From the Age Sept.18 " *..local residents outraged by public land being handed to private developers for high-rise apartments say the report calls into question how the deal was done.*"

The report found that " *the Napthine government's Department of Environment and Primary Industry failed to properly oversee management of the 54 hectare reserve.*"

We remind you that it is proposed to build approximately 2046 dwellings just across the road from Malvern East residents already devastated by 18, 6, 7 and 8 storey developments along a 'ribbon' of Commercial land abutting single storey houses. Originally the number of dwellings proposed in and around the Caulfield Reserve was 1200. The Incorporated Plan is exceeded by around 800 dwellings.

Did someone mention greed?

Donations to political parties. "Nothing is for nothing..."

Donations to political parties exceeding \$12,800 are disclosed **after** the election. In another article on the also on Sept. 27, the Age says, " *Accepting donations from builders and property developers may have been banned in NSW, but Victoria has no such bans.*" On Oct .14 John Walsh wrote, " *Given the spectacular expose of Liberal MPs in NSW can there be any surprise at the reluctance of the Napthine Government to give IBAC real clout?*"

And on Sept.3 Minister Guy had argued that " *following the NSW lead to ban them would 'criminalise one part of the business community.'*"

Sums it up, doesn't it?

Tougher apartment rules on the table (MEG wonders whose table?)

Stonnington Council worked with the Government architect on tougher rules for apartments. Alas, as soon as the Government architect had lodged his recommendations with the Government he left for Perth. The recommendations are now with the Dept. and it looks as if they'll stay there for quite a while. We were told at our last meeting with Minister Guy that they are **confidential**. Many of the new apartments throughout the State (right here in Malvern East too!) have low ceiling heights, are too small, have no direct light, no storage etc. etc. In Sydney the

minimum size for a one-bedroom apartment is 50 sq.m. As many of us know from bitter experience this is not the case in Victoria. Victorian President of the Australian Institute of Architects was quoted in the Age (July 24/14) .."...*new design standards are crucial if Melbourne is to avoid 'future slums.'* MEG has no doubt that the future slums are with us right now.

Chaddy 'thug zone' warning (Leader Aug. 12)

A resident has called for a permanent police presence in the area after her teenage son and his friend were bashed by a group of youths. The Leader has reported a number of similar instances around the shopping centre.

"Chaddy gets makeover" (Leader Sept.9)

Is there no end to it? If you've been to Chadstone lately you are aware of the vast changes that are being made to the northern side of the centre and the beginning of excavation for the multi-story hotel and (equally) multi-storey office block. Much of the demolition on the northern side was done out of construction hours to the distress of residents. (**After all, demolition isn't "construction" is it?**) Residents will be subjected to the noise for 7 days a week until it all opens in September 2016.

'Property priority'

Nola Martin wonders in a letter (Age Aug.28) "*if any Victorian government will have the courage to acquire homes in Malvern, Toorak, Armadale and Sth Yarra to cope with additional traffic if the Port of Hastings project goes ahead.*"

MEG wonders too and we also wonder if any open space might be 'acquired' in the same way that large tracts of Royal Park is being 'acquired.' We have heard that some homes in Stonnington would have to be acquired for the upgraded rail lines.

It seems that Waverley Rd. is being attacked from all directions.

Fire station at 80-90 Waverley Rd.

Recently this site was sold with a permit for a 5 level complex with 64 flats, 2 shops and 66 car spaces for about \$8 million....(Bus. Age Sept.20) MEG seems to remember that the Waverley Rd. DDO had that area marked for 4 storey developments. We wonder who gave the owners a permit for 5 storeys?

Crethaven...239-241 Waverley Rd. & 1a The Avenue

Amended plans are expected at Council in the near future. 78 residents objected to the size and height of this massive application and it seems that their objections were taken on board by the applicant. We'll know when the new plans are in.

226-228 Waverley Rd.

This site was previously occupied by Abbeyfield Malvern East. Those residents have vacated the property and there is an application for a 3 storey building with 28 apts. and 32 car spaces. The plans show a site coverage of 63.2% and permeability of only 14.9%.

The requirement is for at least 20% permeability. A Landscape Plan was requested by Council and has been received. The basement must be HUGE. MEG has no doubt that amended plans will be submitted. There's an interesting story behind this.

Old Weeroona Site...cnr. Waverley Rd. & Serrell St. (72,74 & 76 Serrell St.)

There are 42 objections to the proposed development on this site. The application is for 61 dwellings ...22 in a 3 storey apartment block and 39 two & three storey townhouses in 5 separate buildings. In all there is a total of 113 spaces (101 resident spaces and 12 visitor spaces, some in the basement and some in front of the townhouses. After a Consultative Meeting .further Discussion Plans were lodged with Council.

909,911 & 913 Dandenong Rd.

On Sept. 29 Council deferred a request by the owners to have restrictive covenants removed from their properties. In Notice Paper for Oct 14 the recommendation from the Pl.Dept. was to refuse the request. The owner of 909 Dandenong Rd. has previously attempted to remove the covenant by a planning application which was refused by Council and subsequently refused by VCAT as there was an objection from one of the approximately 380 beneficiaries of the covenant. An application to the Supreme Court could be made ...an expensive operation which is often unsuccessful.

887 Dandenong Rd. 8 storeys, 43 apts. 31 car spaces on the corner of Finch St.& Dandenong Rd. One Councillor attempted to negotiate with the developer and achieved some small concessions which didn't result in any objections being withdrawn. There seemed to be some reluctance on the part of Council to refuse it but it ended up being refused. Needless to say the applicant has whizzed off to VCAT. The interesting twist that we mentioned in our last newsletter is that in his documentation the applicant said ...'in the City of Moreland's MSS' ...MEG obtained information from a group in Moreland that there was a similar application lodged by the same team (different company) in Moreland. Seemed to be a 'copy & paste' job! To add to the applicant's difficulties some objectors didn't receive notification of the VCAT appeal. A phone call to the applicant's solicitors resulted in a claim that Council had given them the wrong list and the firm had to then courier the papers to the actual objectors. **All we can hope is that the VCAT case adds further to the applicant's woes with regard to this application.**

875-879 Dandenong Rd.

Not to be out done the owner of these sites having got a permit for 7 storeys from VCAT then applied to Council for some **minor** changes...addition of 2 apts. & car spaces & reconfiguration of some internal arrangements. Without notifying residents Council Pl. Dept. granted all 19 changes and as soon as he got those concessions the owner applied for an 8th storey...10 more apts. car parking dispensation. This had to be advertised because **10 more apts.** was considered to be "a transformation."

Beware of anything granted under Secondary Consent. You will not be told about it.

857 Dandenong Rd.

Meanwhile the 7 storey 'thing'on the corner of Clarence St. & Dandenong Rd. is progressing apace. We can hardly wait to see the 'green wall' on the northern side.

Planning Applications We list here some of the applications in Malvern East and we'll begin this segment with **some** of the applications for **part demolition, alterations & additions in Heritage Overlays.**

28 Turner St., 22 Belsen St., 70 Beaver, 11 Epping, 1189 Dandenong Rd., 9 Kerferd, 22 Gilman St., 7/70 Finch St., 60 Repton Rd. 33 Coppin St.

1015-1019 Dandenong Rd. Use of land as motel & emergency accommodation.

62 Hughes St. Variation of restrictive covenant. Info requested. To be supplied by Dec. 2014.

418 Wattletree Rd. Dual occ. In GRZ with a Neighbourhood Character Overlay. Amended plans to be provided for one dwelling on site.

62 Millewa St. Dual occ.

8 Nyora St. Constr. of multi-dwelling & reduction in car parking requirements.

86 Burke Rd. Constr. of multi-dwelling & reduction of car parking requirements.

383 Wattletree Rd. Constr. of multi-dwelling & reduction in car parking req.

616-618 Warrigal Rd. Constr. of multi-dwelling & reduction of car parking req.

11, 13 & 15 Chadstone Rd. Constr. of 3 two storey townhouses & 6 lot sub-division & removal of easement. Stat. Dec. not yet supplied by applicant. Application cannot proceed without this.

225 Waverley Rd. Addn. of 2 storey unit to rear of existing units.

25 Chadstone Rd. 10 dwellings, 12 car spaces.

32 Tooronga Rd. dual occ. In H.O.

226-228 Waverley Rd. multi-dwelling dev. 3 storeys...28 apts. 32 car spaces.

23 Midlothian St. 2 dwellings on a lot. Permit issued.

89-93 Finch St. Constr. of 2 or more dwellings on a lot. NOD issued.

90 Manning Rd. Dual occ. NOD issued. Appealed. VCAT hearing Oct. 14. Permit issued on the day of the hearing.

23 Coolgardie Av. Dual occ. In H.O. Refused at Council Mtg. Oct. 13.

18 Goode St. Constr. of 2 dwellings on a lot. NOD issued. Appealed. Awaiting date.

1009-1011 Dandenong Rd. Multi-dwelling dev. Permit refused. Appealed. VCAT hearing Feb. 16/2015.

There are many more applications in the suburb of Malvern East. We have included a sample of what's happening across our area.

Breaking News!

In Bus. Age Oct. 25 Mark Pallisco reported,

"When shrewd developer Michael Yates last month unveiled two South Yarra buildings he had recently received ministerial approval to develop, he was quietly formalizing a plan to sell the project to a Chinese developer.

In an off-market deal, Yates is speculated to be banking about \$30 million from the sale of 663 Chapel St."

You might remember that Minister Guy intervened in this Planning Application after it had been refused by Council and before the VCAT case began. He actually changed a Planning Scheme Amendment for Chapel St. Nth which had a preferred height limit of 38m and allowed 661 & 663 Chapel St. to exceed 90m.

Beggars belief doesn't it?