



Malvern East Group

MEG Supports **PLANNING BACKLASH**

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MEG Newsletter...September/October 2024

From the Convenor's Desk

Everything I wrote for this paragraph has been deleted. It was dated by the publication of State Government's latest thought bubble which the Premier said in an interview on 3AW on Oct.22 has been **10 years in the making**. It's Dan's plan and he skipped out with his payout and left it to Allan to break the news to us. Some of us who have had rather a lot to do with planning issues and residents' groups for more years than I care to count have been expecting this since the time of the Brack's government. This entire planning disaster has slowly but surely made itself known by a gradual 'watering down' of restrictions on new developments, a gradual loss of backyards, a gradual loss of the trees we depend on to cool urban areas and absorb pollution...that's it...a gradual loss, going almost unseen and once active residents' groups slowly becoming inactive, rising only when a large proposal hits the news and disappearing almost immediately. Matthew Guy's '**zones**' reforms gave us hope of saving some of the best parts of existing suburbs and we worked so hard to get that legislation, doomed to die a not so slow death at the hands of the present State Government...and we're told when every council is in 'caretaker mode' and council candidates are not permitted to speak.

CEOs are not in 'caretaker mode' so can say something and
Stonnington's CEO, Dale Dickson has this statement on the Stonnington website.

*"The City of Stonnington was blindsided by the State Government's 'train and tram' activity centres announcement yesterday, **with 9 out of twenty five located in Stonnington**. This unilateral announcement represents major urban planning and public policy **by stealth**, which risks poor long term liveability outcomes for residents. Had the State Government asked, Stonnington would have confirmed it is already well placed to deliver on the government's population and housing growth targets, particularly in transit-orientated locations. Stonnington has in place a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to delivering on future housing needs, which is based on substantial community engagement and will best ensure the liveability and amenity of local neighbourhoods are not unduly eroded. Stonnington is planning for more intensive housing growth in the right locations to ensure greater housing choice and more inclusive vibrant neighbourhoods. Critically, Stonnington's current land use planning framework provides for an additional 65,000 dwellings by 2051. This is well in excess of State Government's target of 51,000 by 2051. Given the widespread local community interest and lack of detail in the State's announcement, Stonnington will be working hard to make sense of the announcement and its implications in the coming weeks. Importantly, we will be appropriate forms of housing and other development in designated locations within Stonnington's local retail and commercial centres."highlighting the solutions already outlined in the Council's housing strategy, along with further work in early 2025 on a proposed neighbourhood activity centre program which will ensure appropriate forms of housing and other development in designated locations within Stonnington's local retail and commercial centres.*

For more information about State Government's Activity Centres Program and to provide your feedback, contact the Victorian Government at activitycentres@vpa.vic.gov.au.

Well, there you have it...9 out of the announced 25 activity centres are in Stonnington. I look at the 18 storey thing looming just beyond the backyards of Chanak St. and just beyond that in Caulfield at the MRC's unbelievably soulless development which shatters into oblivion what was once a 'house and garden' neighbourhood and I ask,

"Haven't we destroyed enough?"

YIMBYs are delighted

The YIMBYs' last communication began with...***"This is what real housing action looks like."*** They can hardly contain their delight with State Government's decision to destroy as much of Melbourne as it can before the 2025 election....IF it can find enough developers to carry out its wishes.

The YIMBYs tried to have candidates for Council sign a pledge *"to advocate for and actively work towards increasing social and key worker housing in my ward and the broader local government area. I believe that more diverse housing options are essential for the wellbeing and success of our local community, and I am committed to ensuring everyone has a safe, secure and affordable home."*

Sounds innocuous, doesn't it? One wonders why they are so supportive of the excesses proposed by State Government. We wonder how many developers and Government employees comprise the membership of the YIMBYs.

Developer hits back in 'The Age' on October 24

Max Shifman says his company *"won't be building these sorts of apartments any time soon."* He says that *"it costs at least three times as much to build a square metre of a new apartment compared with a good quality townhouse or four times more than a new detached house."*

Further to that first home buyers want 3 bedrooms and they don't usually want them in an apartment building. He says that in a Westpac Housing Pulse survey from March this year *"only 26 per cent of buyers in Melbourne were seeking an apartment or unit for purchase."* He argues that if the apartments were significantly cheaper it might be a different story. *"The price of materials, high building standards and labour costs all contribute."*

MEG would argue that the higher standards have been a long time coming but recognize that the cost of materials is sky high and that developers can't compete with what this State government pays in wages for workers in the 'big build.' We read recently that forklift workers on a Government project receive \$300,000 a year!

Shifman says that in the 2010s about 25,000 a year were built and now only 4,000 are built in a year because both local and foreign investors ***"have been discouraged to invest in Victoria by a combination of government taxes and policies."***

He says the Government is selling a dream that can't be realized. Speeding up apartment development in a multitude of Activity Centres does not mean much if the end product is too expensive and *"temporary off-the-plan stamp duty savings of \$40,000 does not make up for the extra \$700,000 a young family needs to find to purchase a relatively small 3 bedroom apartment in the middle of Brighton....."*

He says that Government needs to **incentivise developers** to build what people want.

(From the Convenor...I never thought in my wildest dreams I would contemplate for one moment that 'incentivising developers' might save us from something worse.)

"Growing Pains" The Age...October 26

Victoria is Australia's fastest growing State with a population of more than 7 million people. How big does State Government want the State's capital, Melbourne, to be? Premier Allan doesn't answer when she is asked this question. She just brushes it aside as if she's anxious to *"get on with the concrete pour."* (How true!) What is at risk at the hands of this careless government is Melbourne's liveability.

Liz Allen is a demographer from ANU says that Australia needs a population policy. The Federal Government has no such policy nor does any State Government and while the policy makers remain silent our population continues to grow and there's no framework in place anywhere. With State Government's recent announcements about housing...and there's more to come...there is little or no mention of where the services like health and education will come from. As usual with this Government there is no REAL planning. It's all half-baked 'pie in the sky' dreamed up by the YIMBYs.

Liz Allen says, *"In order for a population policy to be effective*

it needs to have a holistic approach to population well-being.

This includes housing, education, health and employment."

She thinks that State Government latest proposal is all "bells and whistles with no funding attached. It is great for getting votes but Victoria is trying **to put a band-aid over a bullet hole.**"

MEG thinks that it's not great for getting votes and hopes for a viable alternative.

The building watchdog has failed...yet again! ABC News ...October 24

"The damning report has prompted the government to announce it will replace the VCA with a new, more powerful watchdog with greater powers to tackle sub-standard building work.

Poor building standards and unethical conduct had flourished in an ineffective regulatory environment overseen by the VBA."

MEG has been a member of a small group from Planning Backlash (now defunct) which has met regularly with Planning Ministers over a number of years and each one has said that something had to be done about the VBA. The previous Planning Minister presided over the cladding debacle overseen by the VBA...and there was actually an even 'more previous' Planning Minister on the VBA. Beggars belief! We now have yet another State Labor Government "doing something" about the VBA. Here's hoping!

Fears for apartment quality with lag in new standards The Age...October 25

Planning minister Sonya Kilkenny says that "an update to the **Better Apartments Design Standards ...**"state government design guidelines that developers adhere to... will only occur by 2026...4 years after a parliamentary inquiry into apartment design published its final report."

State Government's very own Planning Minister said there won't be any new design standards just as State government announces that thousand & thousands of new apartments will be built by disappearing developers.

The Age Magazine...Good Weekend ...September 21

"Think for a second how much of the world we've covered in asphalt. Conservative estimates put it at one million square kilometres...the size of South Australia or Egypt. Heavy, dense and dark asphalt absorbs heat and robs the soil beneath of oxygen and water. It's one of the prime contributors to the urban heat-island, where cities are 2-10 degrees hotter than the surrounding countryside....."

*"We're building new suburbs with vast expanses of unshaded asphalt, black, heat-absorbing roofs **and not nearly enough trees**"*

How many times have we said that since MEG began in 2005?

"The time to fortify our cities is now. Air-conditioning alone won't save us from the worst effects of climate change."

Stonnington Council also has a liking for asphalt, cement and plastic grass...nice, hot, green plastic grass. If you haven't seen the \$71 million worth of hard stuff at Prahran Square do have a look at it and weep!

More about 'growing pains'

"It doesn't have to be 20-storey towers everywhere," says Infrastructure Victoria chief executive Johathon Spear. "We're not saying that and we don't think the government is saying that either. "There will be some places that are well-suited to high-rise apartments.

Survey results from Infrastructure Victoria's "Choosing Victoria's Future" showed that "the lure of a detached home on a block of land in a new suburb, preferably with a garage, remains strong. Two thirds of respondents said they preferred a stand-alone house, compared to only 8.9 per cent who nominated a high-rise apartment."

20% of those who wanted a house said they would consider an apartment if they could find one at a reasonable price.

LOCAL NEWS

Council election results We have been advised that the election results will be announced at 2p.m. on November 12 at Malvern Town Hall. The results will be on the City of Stonnington website.

173 Burke Rd.

Woolworths got what they wanted. They took their proposal for a 5 storey development straight to the Minister and the 5 storey development will now proceed...unless something can be done within 28 days from the announcement of the decision. There is no right of appeal to VCAT against a Government 'planning' decision so we are not too sure what avenue of appeal can be used to further oppose this decision.

Rumour hath it

There's a rumor around the traps that the golf course in Malvern East over near Holmesglen TAFE will soon not be used for golf any more. If any one of you has heard anything about this would you let MEG know? We know that Stonnington Council sold the house that abutted the golf course but anything else is just a rumor at this stage.

Chris Gahan Centre

At Council Meeting on September 16 Council resolved to demolish the Chris Gahan Centre in Grattan Gardens and connect the open space with the concrete-dominated Prahan Square. Much pride in Prahan Square was expressed. Whenever that place is mentioned in conversation there is always someone who says, "*Isn't it AWFUL?*" and MEG always responds with, "*Yes, it is!*"

Windsor Community Children's Centre...131-133 Union St.

The centre has been located at this address since 1997. The site is owned by Swinburne University which says the site is "*surplus to requirements*" and wishes to sell to a developer. In July 2024 Council considered buying the site but a lack of money in the coffers put paid to that idea. Parents of the 54 children who attend the kindergarten lobbied Council vigorously and on September 16 authorised the CEO to explore a possible purchase and make representations to State and Federal governments during the time Council is in 'caretaker mode.'

Gardner Kindergarten to close....Sunday Age...September 22

The kindergarten has occupied the site in St. Andrews Lane in Glen Iris for 80 years and has now been given notice by the Uniting Church that it will close by the end of 2025. The Uniting Church proposes to sell the site to developers. In The Age on September 21 it was reported that "*the church would be willing to sell the site to the pre-school at market value.*"

That's two kindergartens in Stonnington facing closure in the near future unless some government somewhere can find enough money to buy them and allow the kindergartens to continue occupation.

Chadstone Activity Centre.....which is in Malvern East

State Government proposes construction of 6,500 – 8000 dwellings in this Activity Centre with **no commitment** to provide tram or train services to the centre. Over a number of years MEG has attended several meetings regarding the shopping centre. We have presented to Planning Panels Victoria. Over and over again we have supported residents in fruitless attempts to curb the ever-expanding commercial activities of the Vicinity/Gandel owned centre...and we have failed! We have heard from representatives of the owners how they would LOVE to have a train or tram service to the site and we have encouraged them to make representations to State Government. IF they have ever done that, they have failed miserably. All of the recently announced Activity Centres have a nodding relationship with trams and/or trains but Chadstone in Malvern East doesn't even get a token nod. The recommendations made in the submission

regarding development in and around the shopping centre by Stonnington's Planning Department were ignored as State Government blithely overrode ANY planning principles. Residents were allowed to speak at the recent meeting with State Government employees BUT they are not allowed to formally object to ANYTHING.

High-rise proposal blindsides Toorak The Age...October 23

We've already told you that 9 of State Government's first lot of new Activity Centres are in Stonnington and these include Toorak and Toorak Village. Residents and traders are not sure of what the government is proposing....10 or 30 storeys for the historic village?

MEG believes that the Government is not sure either
but says it will decide after community consultation.

Epic auction Business Age...October 26

"Four bidders lobbed more than 900 bids at an epic two-hour auction battle on Armadale's blue-chip High Street shopping street on Wednesday."

There was about 100 people at the auction of 1047-1051 High St. which eventually sold for \$11,405,000 to a private investor. The street has a vacancy rate of 2.3% with rents commanding as much as \$2000 a sq.m.

"The double storey shop and office on the corner of Moorhouse St. has been in the same family for more than 50 years."

Not the same story at nearby Hawksburn Village where the auction of 581-583 Malvern Rd was a washout. The property was passed in at \$6.8 million after a few dispirited bids.

Some of the Planning Applications in and around Malvern East

27 Soudan St. Malvern Pt. dem., bldg. & wks to dwelling in H.O.

80-90 Waverley Rd. Amendment to approved plans to allow for increase in students from 80-160 & increase in staff from 6 to 10. Amend plans to show that whole building used for dance studio,

14 Glendearg Gr. Malvern Dem of existing carport & rear fence & reconstruct.

31 Brunel St. Extension to single dwelling in NCO.

57 Edsall St. Malvern Proposed alterations and additions.

49 Ferncroft Av. Dem of existing dwelling and construction of new 2 storey dwelling.

31 Edgar St. Glen Iris Construct 2 or more dwellings on a lot.

71 Kerferd St. Dem. of pat of existing dwelling. Double storey extension with basement.

8 Wheatland Rd. Malvern Renovation & extension of existing single storey dwelling in H.O.

1269 High St. Malvern Constr. Of multi-dwelling development in GRZ. Reduction in car parking requirement.

10 Olive St. Construction of 2 dwellings on a lot.

10 Mailland St, Glen Iris 3 lot subdivision.

895 Dandenong Rd. Pt. dem. bldg. & works to allow for an increase in area in which liquor can be consumed.

36 Stanhope St. Armadale Pt. dem., addns & alterations to existing dwelling on a site less than 300 sq.m, on H.O.

9 Epping St. Internal renovations and upper floor extension.

12 Milton Pde Malvern Construction of 2 dwellings.

1 Deakin St. Malvern Pt. dem., alterations & additions to dwelling in H.O.

11 Gardner Av. 2 lot subdivision.