



Malvern East Group

MEG Supports **PLANNING BACKLASH**

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MEG NEWSLETTER....JUNE/JULY 2017

From THE Convenor's Desk

At the Rally on June 8 (to which most of you did not go!) we heard from Professor Michael Buxton of dire changes that have already been made to the Victorian Planning System and of worse changes to come. Opposition speakers promised to reverse the situation. Shadow Minister for Planning David Davis came up with the best expression of the day when he referred to Premier Andrews as Density Dan. So the equation appears to be...

Density Dan + Density Dick = Densification

With Density Dan's approval Density Dick has REFORMED the zones so that we can have more densification forced upon us whether we like it or not.

In Item 6 of Council Notice Paper of May 22 the changes are outlined.

ONE of the worst is the change to the NRZ. Until now there could be no more than 2 dwellings on a block in an NRZ. (Neighbourhood Residential Zone) That restriction has been lifted. The 9m height limit remains with a little addition that dwellings can't be lower than 9m. In the GRZ (General Residential Zone) there's a maximum height of 11 m with 3 storeys as a maximum and in the RGZ (Residential Growth Zone) the height limit in Stonnington is as it was at 13.5m. There are some other changes.

But fear not! Densities Dan & Dick have mandated a "garden area" requirement and it was proudly proclaimed by Density Dick that he had "saved the backyard." I think he considers that he is speaking to the certifiably insane when he talks to us like that.

This is the same Planning Minister who is recorded in Hansard in December 2016 saying in a Parliamentary exchange which referred to populating the municipalities that have large areas of NRZ, ***"I will get you fixed, no problems at all."*** So erudite!

Melbourne's Population

Remember when the last census was taken? Remember the computers breaking down? Remember how doubt was cast on anything that the census figures threw up? Newspaper reports seem to have thrown all doubts aside. No mention has been made of the glitch! There's one thing that's not in doubt and that's the endless upward spiral of Melbourne's population

Sunday Age (April 9) talks about ***"unprecedented growth is transforming Melbourne."***

(N.B. Transforming it is one thing ...destroying it is another!)

"No Australian city has experienced growth on this scale before."

On July 4 the Age editorial commented on the fact that as a result of this 'unprecedented growth' we are suffering from ***"infrastructure poverty"*** and that ***"Melbourne is becoming a less pleasant place to live and work."*** In the same paper Mathew Knight urged action to save ***"Melbourne from becoming a congested, polluted and less liveable place for us all."***

There's no doubt that in the more secluded parts of certain suburbs Melbourne retain the "liveable city" label but venture out of those tree-lined streets and away from the homes on garden sites and we see a very different picture. Density Dan & Density Dick want to change the beauty and calm of some areas of Melbourne and turn them into the chaotic mess of areas such as the Forrest Hill Precinct or the teeming CBD so that everyone suffers the same fate. It's not justice. It's stupidity!

This Government is slowly but surely removing the "lungs of the city." Hundreds of trees are being destroyed on a daily basis while vast numbers of deeply flawed apartment buildings darken the sky and it's all for the sake of a quick buck for the developers and money in Government coffers.

We are reminded in the midst of this deluge of people that the Victorian economy would be stagnant without the reliance on population and property. We're not producing anything. We're just building and selling property.

In Sunday Age July 2 we read that *"population is propping up an otherwise stagnant state economy, generating property-related taxes that account for almost half of state-raised revenue."*

Decentralisation

The Interim Report from Matthew Guy's "Population Taskforce" is available online. This is the first step towards what might be a sound 'decentralisation' policy but there has to be a lot of work done to persuade people to live, work and play in the regions.

Business Age June 7 reported that *"National Bank chairman Ken Henry says the nation faces an 'extraordinary' economic opportunity to develop regions outside the capital cities, as the bank bets on a long-term lift in rural Australia."* NAB's board of directors met in Mildura during June. Ken Henry sees this as a *"unique time to pursue the development of regional economies thanks to high population growth, strong Asian demand for exports and the digital revolution."*

If the banks are talking about developing the regions Governments ought to be following that lead. Banks don't do 'nuthin' for 'nuthin.' There must be profit in such a policy.

Cladding

The Grenfell disaster in London has brought the question of cladding to the fore again. State Governments have been aware of this problem for several years and it's an on-going issue. When Grenfell occurred Mr. Wynne said *"it couldn't happen here"* and of course it could. On June 23 the Age reported that Mr. Wynne *"has strongly criticised the Victorian Building Authority."* The VBA has led the investigation in the cladding issue. Its CEO said on June 23 that the VBA *"not yet be sure of the scale of the problem."*

(MEG reminds the VBA that the fire at the Lacrosse building occurred in 2014!)

On July 3 Aisha Dow reported on an *"urgent probe into cladding."* State Government has now appointed Ted Baillieu and John Thwaites to lead a *high-profile taskforce* which will identify dangerous buildings. *"It is understood that the taskforce could investigate thousands of properties built over the last 12 years with a focus on high-rise buildings."*

There have been warnings that panels similar to those in the Grenfell tower are widely used in Australia.

And there's more....(Sunday Age July2) *"Fears over faulty glass in apartments."* It seems that imported building products are not being tested by customs officials to ensure

"compliance with Australian standards." Apparently there has been a series of 'spontaneous' glass balcony explosions in apartment buildings recently. The Housing Industry Association blames the lack of testing of materials. The article refers to 3 separate glass balcony explosions at a multi-storey apartment building in Malvern late 2016.

Looks as if the Government will have to appoint **another** 'high profile taskforce' to do a check on the glass in apartment buildings. WHERE have all the Planning Ministers been and WHERE will it all end and WHO would even consider buying into one of these things?

We should tell Density Dan & Density Dick that their Densification is cracking up!

Unprecedented class action

We read with interest in The Age on May 5 news of a class action against Victoria's building regulator *"for failing to protect dozens of home owners from shoddy and dangerous building work."* The VBA plans to defend the case declaring that they had investigated the builder of a townhouse development in Diamond Creek and cancelled his registration and were investigating the building surveyor. *"The Builders Collective of Australia Phil Dwyer said in the 15 years he had been working with building consumers, **not once** had their problems been resolved by the VBA or building commission."*

From Melbourne City Council...Availability of Meeting Documentation

Recently we were made aware that Melbourne City Council makes available audio recordings of open Council Meetings and "committee meetings." These are uploaded to Council's website as soon as possible. Unconfirmed minutes of meetings are available as soon as possible after the meeting. (*Note that....unconfirmed minutes* are made available!) If you go to a Council Meeting you may ask questions...i.e. SPEAK for 90 seconds! You may address a committee for 3 minutes.

We're not allowed to even **breathe loudly** at Stonnington Council Meetings and minutes of Council Meetings are available on the website at some time after they have been confirmed. No such thing as allowing 'the people' to see the unconfirmed minutes and definitely no audio recordings...and as for a really good sound system...perish the thought!

More from Melbourne City Council

(The Age May 26) Plans were approved by MCC to have *"ugly construction fencing and scaffolding made beautiful by local artists."* MCC made it mandatory for developers **to beautify their hoarding!** Council's chair of arts, culture and heritage said that *"Melbourne's development boom had led to grey streets covered in fences...."* Now that's an insightful statement for us to ponder and clearly it's the way to solve the dreariness of it all is to have some art work on the fences. Would be better if planning approval were to be withheld!

ON THE LOCAL SCENE

Membership Subscriptions

It's that time of the year again. MEG membership is due on July 1. We have attached a Membership Form to this newsletter. If you intend to renew your MEG membership it would make our lives easier if you would do it as soon as possible. Without members MEG will cease to exist.

Bowls club standing firm

Rebecca Di Nuzzo (Leader June 27) reported that Stonnington Council had the East Malvern RSL in mind as a new home for the Chadstone Bowling Club. PNA had reported this in their newsletter. Linda Rowland of PNA said that there was no collusion between the PNA and Council about a new site for the Bowling Club and further to that she said that the mention of the move to the RSL in their newsletter was an "honest mistake."

Also in their newsletter (and in a generic email from Kelly O'Dwyer) is the incorrect statement *.."Currently there are just two netball courts in Stonnington, one of which is undersized..."* We have already told Kelly O'Dwyer that there is a netball court at Penpraze Park Recreation Centre. There is also one at Phoenix Park Community Centre too.

MEG has suggested that Council does not need 5000sq.m. in order to provide more courts. MEG can see no reason why a court or two could not be built underground. It is beyond us why the previous Council came up with the notion that a huge lump of a building on a huge site that is used by another sporting group is the only way the problem of lack of netball courts can be overcome. A bit of lateral thinking needed.

Council Notice Paper July 10 East Ward Councillors put forward a motion to have 3 other sites examined more closely. Malvern Valley Golf Course...Orrong-Romanis Reserve...Car Park opposite the East Malvern RSL Club site. The motion was unanimously supported.

Amendment C223...Glenferrie Rd./ High St. Structure Plan

Strategic Planning Report will be on the Notice Paper for Council Meeting on July 24. Submitters to this Amendment should pay close attention to the Recommendation that Councillors will make re this Amendment.

Malvern supersite...Business Age July 8...site included in Amendment C223

We have told you that this site is For Sale and according to the Age a buyer has been found for the 4270sq.m. site on the corner of Dandenong & Glenferrie Rds. It has taken the owner 10 years to acquire a number of sites in this parcel of land and an unconfirmed report indicates that the selling price is \$45 million. *"It is expected to make way for a mixed use high-density development with an end value of more than \$600million. There is potential to build a plaza over the train line...."*

What "preferred height" will Council propose for this site? In the area from Tooronga Rd. to Boardman St. in Amendment C173 (Malvern East) Council recommended **no height limit** and we have an 18 storey thing going up bang up against single storey homes.

Bruce St. Malvern East

MEG has received a report about empty dwellings in this street. Apparently Nos. 31, 33, 45 & 47 have been empty for some time and are deteriorating. There are no applications lodged for these properties. They are in an NRZ so there's a limit to the number of dwellings that could be put on each site. From July 1 State Government has imposed a tax on dwellings that have been empty for more than 6 months.

Remember...there are 82,500 empty dwellings in Melbourne. That's a fair bit of money for Government to fritter away!

Street tree in Finch St. near corner of Finch & Dandenong...the saga.

This tree was supposed to be protected by the developer of 887 Dandenong Rd. Alas, (and to our immense surprise) protection of the tree was not on the developer's agenda

apparently. MEG reported this to Council officers and it was inspected and pronounced “terminal.” We were told it would be ‘demolished’ and replaced. On June 30 the tree was removed. The roots are still there. We await the replacement! In the interim we take heart in the fact that there are images of green leaves on the eastern wall of 887!

11-13 Chadstone Rd. Construction of the approved child-care centre has begun and we heard on radio on July 3 that bookings are so strong that there is already a waiting list. It was reported that cost of child-care at this centre is \$130 a day.

High St. Prahran

Have you ever noticed a tall orange building in High St. just before Chapel St? Since the Grenfell disaster in London residents of the 12 storey building have been warned against lighting barbecues or using lights and powerpoints on their balconies “*over fears the building’s distinct flame-coloured cladding would catch fire.*” In Business Age on July 8 it was reported that the body corporate had been aware of this since 2016. The cladding has been described as “*non-compliant*” and posing an “*unusual fire risk.*”

Cabrini Hospital

More information on our ever-active grapevine about the endless issues emanating from this local institution. In its original application Cabrini wanted to have the donor’s name in lights on the Isabella St. side of its 7 storey building. Changes were made and the VCAT Permit varied that. Subsequently amongst a number of applications made under Secondary Consent Cabrini has put this item on the agenda again and it is rumoured that the name on the donor building would be that of a well-known developer of a shopping centre not too far from us.

Chadstone Shopping Centre

You might remember that **Tower 1** is the completed office block and **Tower 2** will be the Hotel. The owners of the Centre have lodged an application for an increase of 10.7 increase in the height of the building and an increase of floors from 10 to 13 (plus plant) and an increase in number of rooms from 216 to 248. VCAT decided in November 2013 that “*the proposed development exhibits a very high standard of architecture commensurate with the prominence of the site.*” Well, there you go! What do we know about architectural standards.

Sometimes we forget that VCAT is the ‘*de facto*’ planning authority of the State and the arbiter of good design! Residents tend to think that “it’s all Council’s fault!”

65-69 Waverley Rd.

This was advertised in Business Age a number of times. 1,226 sq.m. with proposed plans for 19 apartments. We have received information that the application was refused by Council Pl. Dept. An appeal was lodged and a Merits hearing will be held at VCAT on September 12. The homes on these sites are not part of the Gascoigne Estate.

102,104 & 106 Burke Rd. & 2b Nyora St.

2160 sq.m. advertised in Business Age FOR SALE. The advertisement has been running for some time. It says that there are proposed plans for 18 high end apartments.

851 Dandenong Rd.

This site is on the western corner of Dandenong & Clarence. It has been sold and we expect to see another dreary 7 or 8 storey construction to match the other dreary 7 and 8 storey gems that stretch from Clarence to Finch St. i.e. with the exception of Boothby's office....poor little thing stuck in the middle of all that stuff!

74-76 Chadstone Rd.

This is a gem! The site is on the corner of Chadstone & Waverley Rds. The application is for a 4 storey bldg. with 7 apartments and basement car parking (with car stackers) plus a 2 storey bldg. at the rear of the site comprising 2 townhouses. The site is 898 sq.m. The applicant proudly declares '*4 storeys is a first*' and it '*provides visual prominence and significance.*' The proposal has a "*feature screen*" and this wraps around the corner at levels 1-3 while the upper level is set back "*and appears to be translucent and lightweight with substantial floating eaves.*" The applicant can see no merit in emulating the typically "*lesser quality buildings in the area.*" (All you people who live in 'lesser quality' homes can start cringing.) He wants to have a development that is "*unprecedented in this area.*" All the trees on the site are to go. The healthy ones have been designated as '*healthy weeds*' and there'll be no room for trees that are not weeds in the 22% of land that is not to be covered by buildings and non-permeable surfaces.

MEG can't wait to see the "**floating eaves.**"

191 & 193 Wattletree Rd.

The saga of this site is almost over. You might remember that there was a large single house built over both sites. Supreme Court cases and a VCAT case failed to break the single house covenant on each site. Finally the owners advertised it as 2 lots and each was sold separately.

The new owners must have agreed to a 'shared' demolition of the house. That's been done, a fence has been erected between the sites and an application for a Permit to create car access from Wattletree Rd. has been lodged by the owner of 191 Wattletree. Each site will now have a single house which will not need a Planning Permit. We hate to even contemplate how much this whole process has cost the original owners but we're glad the covenant has won.

A few of the Planning Applications in and around our suburb.

33 Clarence St. Dem. of existing dwelling, constr. of 2 storey dwelling in an NCO.

1 Central Park Rd. 2 storey dwelling.

13 Clarence St. Addn of family room & kitchen to single storey dwelling in an NCO.

24 Beech St. Dem. & construction of a new single dwelling.

3 Beech St. Dual occ.

45 Washington Av. Construction of two 2 storey dwellings.

13 Glenbrook Av. Single house in Hedgely Dene NCO. Permit refused. Appeal lodged. VCAT hearing June 7.

75 Coppin St. Pt. dem., alterations & addns to dwelling in H.O.

728 Waverley Rd. Constr. pt3/pt.4 storey bldg.. 12 dwellings. Refused by Council Pl. Dept. Appeal lodged. Amended plans approval by VCAT at Compulsory Conference May 18

N.B. Site sold with Permit within weeks of Permit being granted!