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MEG SUBMISSION re PLAN MELBOURNE

Introduction

MEG has supported legislation re the Reformed Residential Zones from the moment it was suggested and we are heartened to see that *Plan Melbourne* has a short term aim to ...

deliver the Neighbourhood Residential Zone across at least 50% of Melbourne's residential areas (p.103)

This statement is part of the plan for Melbourne despite the inevitable push from development bodies such as the Property Council who seek to denigrate the "not in my backyard" groups who hold the view that the world is not all about the mighty dollar. Groups such as MEG are passionate about the environment, the compulsory provision of trees so the city can breathe, the provision of open space in both backyards and in public open spaces so children can **play** and people can breathe...and play. The Neighbourhood Zone offers some hope that some of these some of these quaint, old-fashioned ideals can be achieved.

Apart from this positive inclusion in a strategic plan for the city (and the State) we felt as if we were reading a much longer and infinitely wordier version of M2030 which proposes for the City of Stonnington an even more devastating future than M2030 has delivered to us.

City of Stonnington

The designation of the entire city of Stonnington as ***Inner Melbourne*** is, to put it mildly, astonishing. The western part of the city has long been considered Inner Melbourne. The fact that the Government now considers that the entire city from Punt Rd. to Warrigal Rd. as ***Inner Melbourne*** is an anathema. The leafy suburbs of Stonnington ... Malvern, Malvern East and Glen Iris ...are **not** in the same category as the area that was once the City of Prahran. So much of that area has systematically been destroyed by rampant development to the delight of investors and the despair of residents. Further to this we note that the part of Glen Iris that is in Boroondarra is not in this sub-region and that fact merely highlights the deeply flawed designation of ***Inner Melbourne*** which is to be inflicted upon the whole of Stonnington.

Metropolitan Planning Authority

To add to our 'punishment' this new body is to make decisions about planning applications in Prahran/Sth Yarra, High St./Glenferrie Rd. (Armadale & Malvern) Toorak Village, Chadstone **and** Caulfield MAC including parts of Waverley & Dandenong Rds. and everything within 400m of these areas and (just to make sure that all bases are covered for developers) everything 'within walking distance' of the same areas. That leaves Council and the residents of Stonnington completely at

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the mercy of developers. We don't need yet another Planning Authority to make decisions for us. There are enough people already doing that. Let us not forget that we also have Planning Panels Victoria. After reading a wordy, illogical and heavily biased Panel Report on an Amendment a bemused MEG member asked recently, "**Where** do they get these people from?"

VCAT

We note that the Government intends to adequately resource VCAT so that it can make decisions for us. There is no word of the Government **reforming** VCAT as has been promised. The Government intends in the future to **resource** it so that 'it can make decisions in a timely way.' Not one word about it making decisions in a **just** manner.

Why do we need VCAT when we have a Melbourne Planning Authority? Why do we need a Melbourne Planning Authority when we have VCAT? Why do we need Planning Panels when we have VCAT?

VicSmart

Let us not forget that the Government plans to extend VicSmart in order to 'streamline' the planning system. We are not told just how much this is to be extended but if it's far enough we won't need the Melbourne Planning Authority, VCAT or Councils or Planning Panels....and that will fix up the whole thing.

Infrastructure

Virginia Trioli said in Melbourne Review Dec.2

"If you will build it they will come? Mate, they're here already---and there are not enough trams, trains, school, pools, parks or libraries to accommodate them."

She could have added hospitals, ambulances, trains, trams, child care centres, kindergartens and a myriad of other services required in any city. She goes on to say that....

*"the quaint weekend closure of a major train station (Flagstaff) is emblematic of a mindset that has **failed to keep pace** with population and popularity."*

Let's talk about schools....Stonnington is the **only** municipality in the whole of Victoria without an 'open entry' state secondary school. This Government like every other Government for more than a decade has not remedied this. This Government is doing a feasibility study. That is like the 'vision' in Plan Melbourne....parts of the 'vision' are being "investigated" or "considered" or a study is being done. Meanwhile in the Employment Cluster of Monash Municipality no less than 5 school sites have been declared 'surplus' and are to be sold.

Key Objectives

This list of 7 objectives comprises a collection of 'motherhood statements' which we have seen in a plethora of documents, We refer in particular to the first objective..."delivering jobs and investment." What is happening in Commercial

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Zones is a huge increase in housing and a commensurate diminution of longer term commercial activity. There is a nett loss of commercial employment space from local business centres and it is being replaced by new 'higher density' residential developments. It would seem that the Government sees residential development as a commercial activity...and it **is** in the short term. This 'short term' view results in the loss of longer term employment and flies in the face of the Government's policy of "live, work and play" locally. There has to be a specification regarding the percentage of commercial activity that is required in a commercial zone.

PlanMelbourne wants more commercial activity in Activity Centres such as Prahran/Sth Yarra and the other Principal and Major Activity Centres in Stonnington. Has the Government observed the number of empty shops in these centres?

Activity Centres

On p.27 there is a hierarchy of Activity Centres. Neighbourhood Activity Centres are included in the hierarchy. We understood that the Government wanted a circle drawn around the Principal and Major Activity Centres listed in M2030 and around the 3 Business Centres...i.e. around the **actual** centre **not** the surrounding area and that the Neighbourhood Centres and their immediate environs were not to be considered targets for development.

Development Around Stations

Apparently there is a list of sites that are to be targeted for residential and commercial development and Tooronga station is one of these sites. Stonnington Council owns the land at Tooronga Depot adjacent to the station and will not be selling it so apart from the possibility of compulsory acquisition that one can be taken off the list.

The transport hub at Caulfield station at the centre of Caulfield MAC is also to be developed and if that proposal is confined to a well-defined circle around the MAC then there is no reason why this cannot be done **but PlanMelbourne** indicates that the 'circle' is to extend across the highway to encompass parts of Malvern East with the Melbourne Planning Authority making the decisions. From all sides Stonnington is under attack.

A State of Cities

This is just another 'wish list.' The Bureau of Statistics (Nov 27/13) pours cold water on the vision proposed for the listed 'cities' on P.134. The projected huge increase in Australia's population will simply increase the population of Australia's cities which are the drawcard for migrants and which cannot cope with present numbers. The Bureau predicts a decrease in population for country Australia.

Until State Government learns that **a carefully planned, strategically directed, incentive driven** system of decentralization (regionalization) is put into place regional areas will not absorb population increase.

In 2009 David O'Brien (Planning Barrister) spoke on this topic at a MEG Meeting. David O'Brien is now a National Party MLC for Western Region. Why isn't the Government using one of its own Coalition Members who has knowledge of this issue to contribute a sensible and achievable plan?

Public Transport

What can be said that hasn't been said before? How can any major 21st century city continue to build roads without, at the very least, put as much effort into developing an adequate public transport system? How can the same 21st century city not eliminate the level crossings that are the cause of extensive gridlock on the roads? This should be a priority but **no** Government ever puts it first on the list of priorities. There is no real **plan...**just talk.

Conclusion

There are so many worthy intentions and so much generalization in PlanMelbourne that all bodies which deal with planning issues will be able to interpret the document in a way that will further their particular aims....and we're back where we started...with extra burdens on those who wish to protect this city and those 'extras' that State Government has in store for us we have referred to in this submission. What hope does this system give residents who seek to preserve the neighbourhood in which they live by endeavouring to have Councils and VCAT fulfil the Objective of Neighbourhood Character in ResCode Cl.55? Is that the next thing to go?

It would seem that the powers of Councils and the rights of residents are to be watered down so much that we suspect the ultimate aim of State Government is to divide the city into 5 Councils each covering a sub-region and finally to get rid of even that 5 and have one Planning Authority for Melbourne.

It would also seem that the Government will continue to advertise in foreign countries for people to come to Melbourne, to invest in Melbourne by buying apartments without paying stamp duty, to build high-rise apartment blocks without having to sell off 80% of them prior to getting bank finance as our home-grown developers are required to do.

Finally, there is so little **actual planning** in PlanMelbourne that we believe that Victoria will continue to be a state of one teeming city teetering on the edge of this vast continent while competing with similar cities in the other states all teetering on the edge of the same continent.

Ann Reid (MEG Convenor) Andrew Dixon (MEG Treasurer)