



Malvern East Group

MEG Supports *PLANNING BACKLASH*

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Submission re ...Reforming the Victorian Planning Provisions...November 2017

The MEG Committee expresses its anger at the entire lack of contact between DWELP and residents' groups such as ours. DELWP's actions re the Discussion Paper seek to exclude residents from being informed of the proposed changes and from taking part in the decision-making process about the area in which we live.

Community groups have been locked out of the entire Smart (so-called) Planning process and we are informed that this is because we (the people) are....

- (1) incapable of understanding strategic planning
- (2) likely to object initially to change and subsequently accept it...(as if there is ever a choice!)
- (3) further public consultation is unnecessary.

In other words, DELWP and its Minister view the community with contempt!

MEG is left breathless at the sheer arrogance of this Government.

MEG has taken part in a number of Strategic Planning issues. We have attended Information Sessions and Consultation Sessions. We have lodged written submissions to Council and to Planning Panels Victoria re a number of Planning Scheme Amendments. We have made oral submissions to Panel on a number of occasions.

We have NEVER stopped our opposition to a particular Panel decision which allowed "**no height limits**" in one section of the area covered by Amendment C173 ...a decision which has resulted in construction of an 18 storey development with 322 apartments bang up against single storey houses. The sheer ignorance and stupidity of that Panel decision makes us wonder if that particular Panel "*was capable of understanding strategic planning.*"

It would seem that "strategic planning" actually means State Government and those it employs "going where the dollars are."

The Discussion Paper sets out to remove any impediments to the ambitious schemes of developers though considering the decision cited above we wonder if there has ever been **any** real Impediments. In Stonnington it has long been '*development on developers' terms.*'

The Discussion Paper proposes *'getting more development more easily.'* Given the evidence of our own eyes we wonder just how easy can it get? Clearly DWELP's purpose is to achieve more and more development at the expense of all environmental and health issues.

The Discussion Paper suggests the ways and means to accelerate development.

- (1) Broaden VicSmart
- (2) Use Code Assess
- (3) Removal of what developers call 'barriers' to their plans...(residents call them 'safeguards' though they do not save us from much.)

VicSmart must not be broadened. It is quite clear that there is enough of the 'fast tracking' for so-called 'simple' planning applications. The Discussion Paper indicates that "the sky's the limit." When VicSmart was introduced the then Opposition (now the Government) vigorously opposed it saying that it really meant "the sky's the limit" with regard to fast-tracking Planning Applications and this was to be deplored. The same Party (now in Government) has put aside such quibbles and enthusiastically adopted fast-tracking of applications and the Discussion Paper is mere tokenism.

Some of the suggestions DELWP makes for expediting development are:-

...using the building code to assess an application instead of ResCode on lots between 300 & 500sq.m. (N.B. there are no amenity issues considered in the Building Code.)

Mixed Use Zones to have more commercial uses that do not need a Permit.

...more permit exemptions in Heritage Overlays for 'minor' works....whatever that means.

review the existence of Neighbour Character Overlays.

car parking....provide exemptions in selected zones

consider making all car parking applications exempt from notice requirements.

no environmental impacts to be considered.

The list is endless. "The sky's the limit," said the Government when in Opposition.

To introduce '**Code Assess**' to the mix would sound the death knell for our suburbs as we know them. (Remember when Victoria was called 'The Garden State?') Please note that the correct term for 'Code Assess' is 'Free Reign for Developers.' Code Assess is a system in which the applicant assesses his/her application, ticks the boxes and pronounces "full steam ahead." There is no resident input and residents' groups such as MEG vigorously oppose it.

The **Property Council** is apparently delighted with the proposals from DWELP. We are told that such a system "*will cut red tape and accelerate decision-making.*" As they are well-represented on the Advisory Council (**and residents' groups are not represented at all**) of

course they are delighted with the fact that DELWP has done exactly what developers' representatives advised ...i.e. the impediments to development are to be removed. It follows that with this 'top down implementation' any consideration of residential amenity at local level is to be forever consigned to the archives.

The impact of the proposals on Councils will be significant. Stonnington's entire Planning Scheme will have to be re-written just as a Review of the Planning Scheme has commenced. This will have to be restarted...and to what purpose? Whatever we want in our Planning Scheme will be over-ridden by the revised VPPS. As Local Policy cannot now contradict State Policy our Local Policy might as well not exist under proposals in the Discussion Paper so any re-writing or requests from Council for residents' views will be mere tokenism .

There is, of course, no indication of additional resources from State Government for all the additional work. The ratepayers will be forced to pay_even though we were not to be consulted by DWELPand we have to wonder if that was a Ministerial direction!

MEG is grateful for the ever-active grapevine in our network that permits us to discover at least SOME Government scheming.

The entire Discussion Paper is, in essence, a dismantling of all Planning Schemes in Victoria. What is proposed under "Smart Planning" is neither 'smart' nor is it 'planning.'

It proposes "getting more development more easily" and in doing so silencing the voice of residents while residents propose "getting planning in a regulated way."

The residents' way is "**smart** planning." The Government's way is a massive free kick to the development industry.

Ann Reid (MEG Convenor)