



PLANNING DEMOCRACY



The Hon. **KELVIN THOMSON** - Convenor Email: pleasant123@me.com

CONVENOR'S REPORT No. 46 - DECEMBER 14, 2024



HIGH RISE ACTIVITY CENTRES UPDATE

The Victorian Government's High Rise Activity Centres proposals have generated a strong community response. I will try to cover it here, but apologies to those whose actions I may not be aware of or have overlooked.

BAYSIDE COUNCIL – Mayor Cr. Hanna El Moullem said on 21 November that “the expansion of the activity centre program will allow the Victorian Government to seize control of planning for approximately 47% of Bayside... It also potentially removes the opportunity for the Bayside community to have input on planning decisions that could lead to increased traffic congestion, overshadowing, and the destruction of neighbourhood character, heritage, and open space. (“Victorian Government planning reforms to damage the fabric of Bayside”). Bayside Council is holding a Community Forum on this issue on Wednesday 18 December from 6pm to 8pm at Sandy by the Bay, Trevor Barker Oval, Beach Road, Sandringham.

HOBSON'S BAY COUNCIL – “at present, the Housing Targets cannot be accommodated in Hobson's Bay”.

ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA – The Society Chair Dr Charles Sowerwine has written to members warning that “places will become far less sought after if we forget what makes them desirable in the first place. If we destroy heritage to build housing, Melbourne will become “Hong Kong without the view”, a collection of soulless high-rise buildings”.



CAMBERWELL ACTIVITY CENTRE – Julie Mulhauser from the Camberwell Activity Centre Community Reference Group has written to MPs and others advocating for the retention of third party rights of review, and retention of Neighbourhood Character, in the proposed ResCode changes. She has called for the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) to make public the impact assessments – Drainage Impact, Community Infrastructure Needs, and Transport Infrastructure Needs, for all 35 announced Activity Centres. She has also called for the VPA to make public the submissions it has received, and whether they support, or are against, the Activity Centres. Julie has also pointed out that the VPA's answers to her Questions reveal contradictions, with the VPA saying on the one hand that every suburb is unique, then expressly removing neighbourhood character as a planning consideration. Moreover, the VPA says the changes will take many years, yet is engaging in a rushed process with inadequate consultation. Many residents have no idea these changes are being proposed.



HIGH RISE ACTIVITY CENTRES UPDATE



CHARTER 29 – An experienced and respected group of Melbourne planning and design professionals, led by Michael Buxton, Geoffrey Falk, Jim Holdsworth, Mike Scott, and Steve Thorne, has come together to produce a report “Plan for Victoria and the Planning System Reforms”, which sets out the shortcomings of the reforms, and proposes alternative solutions. “It would overload existing infrastructure and services such as schools, preschools, hospitals and parks, and cause major road traffic congestion”. I have included the report as an Attachment. You can visit their website at www.charter29.com.

LIGHTER FOOTPRINTS – Lighter Footprints is a climate action group in Melbourne’s eastern suburbs. Its submission concerning the Camberwell Junction Activity Centre Plan concluded that “the proposed Camberwell Junction Activity Centre is too large an area, proposing too great a change to the City of Boroondara... It raises significant concerns about the loss of tree canopy, the worsening of the urban heat island effect, and the achievability of council climate and biodiversity targets”.

MEDIA REACTION – The ABC 7.30 Report and Adam Carey in The Age did quite detailed reports on the High Rise Centres. The ABC Report is at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/programs/730>. The Adam Carey report zeroed in on the fact that there are zero targets for public and affordable housing in the Activity Centres and their Catchment Areas (Departmental answer to Questions from Julie Mulhauser). This is indeed remarkable – the express purpose of the Centres is to provide affordable housing, but there are no targets to ensure any of the housing being built is actually affordable.

BOROONDARA – The Boroondara Heritage Group for Advocacy and Protection (BHGAP) and the Boroondara Community Group had a deputation to the new Boroondara Council on 25 November. They indicated that they supported Boroondara’s Camberwell Junction Structure and Place Plan. However, they did not support apartment blocks of up to 6 storeys in residential streets, skyscrapers of up to 20 storeys around train stations, changes to zoning which threaten heritage protected streets, or severely curtailing rights for locals to appeal to VCAT. The Boroondara Community Group says the State Government wants to almost double the number of homes in Boroondara from 70,000 to 137,000 by 2051. Development and construction levels would need to be 3 times greater than in the past 10 years to achieve this.

Dr Kate Shaw, Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne School of Geography, writes “We are in an affordable housing crisis... Building more of the expensive dwellings that the market likes to provide is not helping those on low incomes – despite the trickle-down nonsense from the YIMBY crowd”.

Ian Penrose writes “the government plan to densify Melbourne’s middle suburbs conflates two distinct issues, the current housing crisis and projected population growth. Its simplistic single remedy – to promote private multistorey development – is not a way to tackle the current crisis, and will have severe, adverse impacts on city liveability and the environment”.

Hampton residents say their experience of being near a major activity centre is that it is anything but walkable. Their neighbours all have multiple cars per household. Their work, schools and Uni are not on the Sandringham line. Hampton has lost its banks, post office and supermarket, and people now drive to a full supermarket in Moorabbin. “So much for apartments and increased population enlivening the high street”. This is the real world, rather than the make believe YIMBY/property developer world. “We want future generations to enjoy a good quality of life in our beautiful suburbs. The Millennials and Zoomers are our family or the people who have immigrated here to contribute. We care about them. We are very concerned that the Plan for Victoria will produce poor quality buildings that are neither affordable nor liveable”.

NEXT STEPS – CONTACT DETAILS WANTED

A number of people and groups have approached me, either suggesting we have a meeting to discuss ongoing action, or seeking contact details so that they can initiate contact with likeminded groups to develop a broader campaign.

Ian Morgans and Rosemary West and I are looking at holding a meeting in early February 2025 – possibly the Saturday afternoon of February 8, and possibly in the CBD. We will advise you once the details of time and place have been finalized. Our intention is to invite a couple of representatives from each group to attend – it does not need to be a large gathering – and its purpose would be to share actions taken so far, and discuss future actions.

Zheng Chin is working on a website for Planning Democracy. This is intended to include a map of the metropolitan area, with contact details of resident groups for people who wish to become involved in their local area. Please let me know if you are happy for you or your group’s contact details to be included on the Planning Democracy website.

Siobhan Khan has lodged a complaint to the Victorian Ombudsman about the lack of consultation by the Victorian Planning Authority concerning the Metropolitan Activity Centres. She is looking for further information from others who have been part of a Community Reference group, and perhaps for others to do their own complaints. If anyone who has been on a Community Reference Group is able to speak with Siobhan, please let me know, and I will pass on your contact details.

In addition, Tanya Tescher (President of the Whitehorse Ratepayers and Residents Association and Secretary of the Victorian Ratepayers and Residents Association), Siobhan Khan (Boroondara Community Group) and Julie Mulhauser (Camberwell Activity Centre CRG) have each expressed a desire to make contact with other like-minded groups and people. They wish to share information and co-ordinate activities and strategy across Melbourne.

Please let me know if you wish to become involved in one or more of their campaigns, or are happy for me to share your contact details with them.

DEPUTATION TO PLANNING MINISTER KILKENNY

The Kingston Residents Association (KRA) organized a deputation to Planning Minister Kilkenny (21 November), and was kind enough to invite Ian Morgans and I from Planning Democracy as well.

Issues raised with the Minister by the KRA included not rezoning the Rossdale Golf Course for residential development, and the terrible impact of the Suburban Rail Loop train yard works. Planning Democracy advocated the Liveable Victoria Manifesto as an alternative to the Government's program of planning deregulation, and removing the rights of Councils and residents. Somewhat to our surprise, the Minister said the Government was not removing Council or resident rights (apart from the Suburban Rail Loop, where she acknowledged it was).

The KRA has also written to Minister Kilkenny seeking a public statement that the Minister will not support rezoning Rossdale golf course, as she has done with Keysborough Golf Course. They note that Rossdale is located on flood-prone land, regularly goes under water when there is heavy rain, and is identified in the Marine and Coastal Council/Kompas report as subject to inundation in coming decades due to climate change. Building housing on flood prone land in the face of known risks is reckless and irresponsible.

The KRA says Rossdale has bird and wildlife habitat, is usefully close to the Ramsar-listed Edithvale Wetlands, and that extra dwellings proposed for Kingston will make outdoor recreation facilities like Rossdale more valuable than ever.

Thanks to Rosemary West for her work on this Deputation.



FRIENDS OF QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET INC.

QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET SUBMISSIONS WANTED

The Friends of Queen Victoria Market are urging the community to comment on the Public Environment Report for the Queen Victoria Market Southern Development Project. Every voice counts! The deadline for comments is 20 December. Submissions can be sent by email to gurrowaplace@lendlease.com (please send a copy of your submissions to qvmfriends@gmail.com and Minister.Plibersek@dceew.gov.au). They can also be sent by mail to ATT: Proponent, Adam Williams, Level 14, Two Melbourne Quarter, 697 Collins Street, Docklands VIC 3008. For detailed information on the Lendlease Public Environment Report, go to gurrowapl.com.au and click Documents.

The Friends of Queen Victoria Market and heritage experts have grave concerns about major elements of the development, including

- **The impact of the towers. The bulk, height, and proximity of the proposed T1, T2 and T3 towers will overwhelm the market. These developments will obscure the market's heritage sightlines and diminish its historical and cultural value.**
- **The Franklin St stores. These stores are actively and continuously used as storage for fresh food traders; converting them into restaurants diminishes the theatre of the market.**
- **Demolition of the Franklin St stores canopy. This will also diminish the heritage significance of the market.**
- **QVM Car Park to become a forecourt for restaurants and the tower development. The conversion of the car park alienates one third of the market from the market sheds.**
- **6 -8 years of Construction Disruption. 1000 plus concrete deliveries, 25 semi-trailers per day, and truck movements disrupting pedestrian and vehicle access to the Market. Traders will face increased costs, reduced accessibility, and declining customer numbers during this time. This will undermine their viability, and cause traders to abandon the market.**

Thanks to B. Mc Nicholas (Heritage Matters) and Mary-Lou Howie (Friends of Queen Vic Market) for this update.

QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET WIN

Traders and customers have had a win at the Queen Vic Market, with eastbound traffic along Franklin Street from Peel Street being re-opened. This is the outcome of a collaborative effort between the City of Melbourne and the market community. The Queen Victoria Market is now open for business and car accessible – the car park is now open, Testing Grounds has gone, car park construction has gone, and the Franklin Street exit is open.

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CITY OF MELBOURNE

RESIDENTS 3000 ACTIVIST ELECTED TO CITY OF MELBOURNE

Rafael Camillo, who has led the CBD resident action group, Residents 3000, has been elected to the Melbourne City Council. One of the key issues for CBD residents and Residents 3000 has been safety and security in the CBD. Their latest newsletter notes alarming ongoing issues with drug taking in Hosier Lane, which was voted by Lonely Planet years ago as the best free tourist attraction in Australia.

CITY OF MELBOURNE VOTING NEEDS REFORM

The Carlton Residents Association has added its voice to calls for reform of the voting system for the Melbourne City Council. Their newsletter, Newsflash, notes low voter turnout and a significant informal vote. It calls for one vote one value, the reintroduction of Wards, attendance voting, and the election of the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor by the Council.

They also note that campaign donations are not disclosed in real time. Candidates can and do hide their donors until after the elections are over, when it's a bit late for voters to take their funding sources into account.



HERITAGE IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

The National Trust has done a submission to the Victorian Government consultation on "Big Ideas for Victoria's Future" for the "Plan for Victoria". The Trust says "Heritage on all fronts is being called into question through a spread of misconceptions scapegoating our protection systems for contributing to the housing crisis and locking up developable land. However, these simplistic perceptions have been repeatedly disproven by overwhelming proof that when properly valued, our heritage provides clear solutions to many of the identified issues the new plan seeks to solve, including sustainable housing supply." (www.trustadvocate.org.au/national-trust-advocates-for-positive-heritage-planning-reform).

One of the very first executive actions of the Government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, in his first week in office in December 1972, when he and Deputy PM Lance Barnard exercised executive power, was to save Rippon Lea. Most of the Commonwealth's planned compulsory acquisition of Rippon Lea was cancelled, after a community campaign led by the National Trust. The 1970s also saw the rise of iconic Australian band Skyhooks. Their first album, in 1973, was called "Living in the 70s". Their second album, in 1975, was called "Ego is not a Dirty Word". Living in the 70s, it wasn't just Ego that was not a dirty word, Heritage wasn't either.



FUTURE HOMES DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION BANYULE

Michelle Giovas from Friends of Banyule advises that Banyule City Council has just received its first "Future Homes" development application at 125 Mountain View Parade Rosanna, under Clause 53.24 of the Banyule Planning Scheme. (<https://www.banyule.vic.gov.au/planning-building/Review-local-planning-applications/Planning-applications-on-public-notice/125-Mountain-View-Parade-ROSANNA-P11352024>).

Residents are concerned about the loss of rights to object and be involved. Michelle asks if other municipalities in the metropolitan area have received "Future Homes" applications, or whether Banyule is the first. If you are aware of Future Homes applications in your area, please let me know.

BIG WIN AT LITTLE RIVER

Pacific National have withdrawn plans to develop a freight rail terminal in the critically endangered Western Basalt Plains Grasslands at Little River. The Western Basalt Plains Grasslands support a considerable number of threatened plant and animal species. It is recognized as being one of the most endangered vegetation communities in Australia. The proposed logistics precinct would have seen detrimental impacts on this fragmented significant landscape. Congratulations to the Little River Action Group and other groups who campaigned successfully against this proposal.



The Kananook Creek Association has slammed a decision by the new Frankston Council to dissolve the Kananook Creek Governance Group. The decision was made at a Council Meeting on 2 December.

The Kananook Creek Association is a volunteer organization with a 50 year history of environmental advocacy. It has been instrumental in transforming Kananook Creek into a healthier waterway. It says that the Creek faces ongoing challenges. The Kananook Creek Governance Group, adopted by Council 2020, was actively working to address these challenges.

However, the decision to discontinue the Working Group means the specific needs of the Creek will be neglected, and raises concerns about transparency and lack of consultation.

TREE CANOPY COVER

New research measuring access to nature for eight major global cities, including central Melbourne and Sydney, has found most have inadequate tree canopy cover. (RMIT University, Society and Environment, 20 November 2024, "Major Australian cities fail international tree canopy goals: study"). The study, published in Nature Communications, uses an emerging sustainable cities measure, known as the "3-30-300" rule. The rule states that every house, school and workplace should have a view of at least three trees, be in a neighbourhood with at least 30% canopy cover, and be within 300 metres of a park.

Just 3% of buildings in Melbourne's innermost suburbs had adequate neighbourhood canopy cover, although 44% of them have views of at least 3 trees. In Central Sydney 84% of buildings passed the "view of 3 trees" test, but only 17% of buildings had enough shade.



BOROONDARA MAYOR COMMITS TO TREE CANOPY

Given the importance of tree canopy cover, one consolation of my recent stay in a Kew Hospital was the view from my hospital bed of thousands of trees. I was therefore pleased to see that the new Boroondara Mayor, Sophie Torney, who represents the Kew area (Studley Ward) committed in her election campaign statements to "Amend local planning laws to safeguard existing trees and protect our tree canopy". Boroondara residents will no doubt be looking forward to action from the new Council to implement this important commitment.



The Combined Residents of Whitehorse Resident Action Groups (CROWAG) are inviting supporters to like and follow the CROWAG Facebook page –

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61565697524340>.

They also note that Eastsider News is the trading name for Independent Community News Group Incorporated, which has a free local digital newspaper. You can go to the link eastsidernews1@gmail.com and ask to be added to their email list.

SUNBURY AMENDMENT C263

Sunbury resident Peter Gavin has made a submission opposing Hume Housing Amendment C263. In it he notes that the Sunbury township is different from other residential parts of Hume. He says that to permit 4 storey housing developments in the immediate proximity of the Sunbury retail/commercial centre would undo the unique character of the Sunbury township. He says that Greater Sunbury is not landlocked, and continues to have acres of land suitable for housing development.

THIRD RUNWAY APPROVED

The Federal Government has approved Melbourne Airport's Third Runway. The 3000 metre long runway will be built parallel and 1.3 kilometres to the west of the existing north-south runway. It is intended to open in 2031. The length of the existing east-west runway will be restored "to maximise opportunities for noise sharing when the third runway opens". I suspect real estate agents won't be promoting affected houses as a "noise sharing opportunity".

HOMES WITHOUT PROPER KITCHENS

B. Mc Nicholas has drawn my attention to a report in The Age which notes that modern apartments "are being built with cramped, impractical kitchens that are forcing residents to store food in bedrooms, cook less and buy groceries more frequently throughout the week".

The new research assessed the kitchens of 115 two-bedroom apartments in Richmond, Box Hill and Footscray, in buildings of between 5 and 17 storeys. At present there are minimum standards for apartment bedroom and living areas, but not for kitchen and dining areas. Unsurprisingly, developers are taking advantage of this.

B. points out that this has implications for the health and well-being of residents. High rise activity centres around train stations with fast food stores, food trucks and cafes, is a recipe for health and obesity problems, creating unhealthy, underprivileged, slums.

DRAFT ROYAL PARK MASTER PLAN

The Draft Royal Park Master Plan is now open for public comment. Consultation closes on Friday 14 February. To view the Draft Plan, and to make comments, go to Participate Melbourne on the City of Melbourne website.

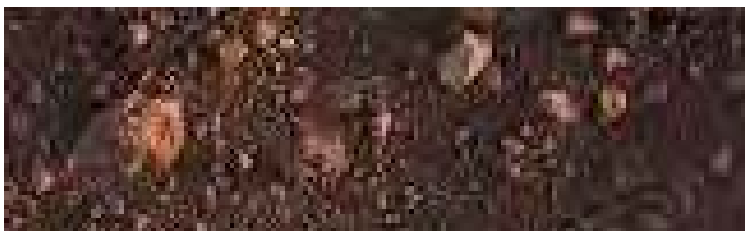
BRYANT AND MAY UPDATE

An application for construction of two towers 13 and 12 levels high at the state heritage listed former Bryant and May Industrial Complex at Cremorne has been approved following a Ministerial call-in. The National Trust says "This development will now have an irreversible and unacceptable impact on one of the few remaining historic places providing a tangible connection to the rich industrial history of Richmond".

EDINBURGH GARDENS FITZROY

I have written to Yarra Council in support of concerns expressed by Fitzroy resident Greg Spark about the need to respect the heritage value of the Edinburgh Gardens in Council's Brunswick Oval and sporting facilities upgrade. Issues raised by the upgrade include the impact on mature English Elms, which have been listed for destruction, the World War 1 Fallen Sportsmen Memorial, and the proposed new grandstand.

The World War 1 Memorial Arbor should have its pedestrian path reinstated, so that it returns to being a processional memorial space to recognize the fallen. The 1901 redevelopment of the grandstand by the then Cricket Club created a very visually appealing vista, and the historic double grandstand setting should be protected.



CONTAMINATED SOIL IN GREEN WEDGE

Gaye Guest has drawn my attention to action by the EPA and Greater Dandenong City Council to have "all works relating to its earthworks permit cease immediately" at 576 Frankston Dandenong Rd. The action relates to a soil mound at the site, which is in a Green Wedge, and about 400 metres away from 500 plus residents at Willow Lodge retirement village.

Neighbours have been concerned by the height of the soil mound, and contamination with asbestos and heavy metals.

On another part of the site, GND Civil has been refused a permit for a soil transfer station by Greater Dandenong Council, but will appeal to the VCAT. The proposed soil transfer station would take in about 20,000 litres of slurry a month.

A Dandenong South soil waste company has been fined and ordered to clean up an illegal dumping of industrial waste in a disused quarry at Woodside North.

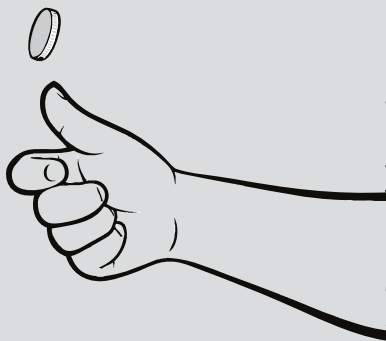
NO LONGER VIABLE TO BUILD APARTMENTS IN PERTH

Perth's rate of apartment completions has collapsed to its lowest since records began in the 1980s. A Property Council report says more than 10,000 apartments in Western Australia have planning approval, but are on hold and cannot be constructed for financial reasons. The Property Council says the cost of delivering an apartment is generally higher than the market is willing to pay. Currently, only LUXURY apartments and low-density greenfield sprawl are economically viable.

To meet the housing targets set by the National Housing Accord, WA would need to be delivering five times the number of apartments per year it currently is, the "Sky High" report said.

KHALIL GIBRAN

***"Safeguarding the rights of others
is the most noble and beautiful
end of a human being".***



HEADS WE WIN, TAILS YOU LOSE.

I have reported before the planning double standard whereby residents cannot appeal to the Planning Minister against a VCAT planning decision, but property developers can. The Brunswick Residents Network News November 2024 reports another example of this. Last year, residents campaigned for improvements to a project at 251 Lygon Street Brunswick. They won some concessions at VCAT, including on height.

Now the developer, Pace Development Group, has gone to the Planning Minister to try to override the umpire and obtain approval for the original application. This is for an eight-storey building, and a five storey building above three levels of basement car parking, with a reduction in the car parking requirements.

Heads we win, tails you lose.

TASMANIAN UPDATE

A group of Tasmanian Mayors has lashed out at a Tasmanian Government proposal to allow some development applications to bypass Council assessment in favour of a panel appointed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Proposals valued at more than \$10 million in a city, or \$5 million in other areas, would go to a Panel rather than the local Council. Clarence Mayor Brendan Blomely said the legislation would take "the voice of the community out of planning decisions. This is the Wild West on steroids".

The Tasmanian Government said the new process will "take the politics out of planning". By "politics", they mean "democracy".

HOUSING MINISTER SUPPORTS RISING HOUSE PRICES

Federal Housing Minister Clare O'Neil has told an interviewer that "our government's policies are not going to reduce house prices and we want house prices to grow sustainably".

For the record, I do not share this view. I have said for many years that housing is an essential, like food, water, petrol, or electricity. We do not cheer when the price of things goes up, and I don't think we should cheer when house prices go up. That cheering drowns out the sad sighs of a generation of young people being locked out of the chance to own a house just as their parents and grandparents did.

Australian house prices have risen faster, and our housing is now less affordable, than just about anywhere else in the world.

TRIGUBOFF SAYS BUILD HIGHER

Billionaire property developer Harry Triguboff has proposed that Australia move to 50 storey apartments. He says "The higher we build, the better it is". "High rise is 50 floors... they're talking about 5 floors". Triguboff also proposes to increase Australia's immigration. I don't understand why Channel 7 interviews him. Are they trying to antagonize their viewers?

HOME BUILDER ON THE HOUSING CRISIS

The CEO of homebuilder QHI Group Scott Challen says the housing crisis was caused by "bringing in more migrants than we can build houses for".

Mr Challen said "The only solution now is a radical solution, and this is where everybody gets upset, especially the banks, especially the big players in corporate finance and stuff in Australia. We need to cut migration to 50,000 a year for compassionate reasons only. We need to go two or three years of this to be able to let the country catch up".

COMING EVENTS



**HUME
&
HOVELL
200 YEARS**

3 Archival Films

15th December
11am, 1pm, 3pm

18th December 4pm, 7pm

at the John Taylor Room
12 Sydney St, Kilmore

Free Entry

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Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year



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That's all folks, till next time. Keep up the good work!
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