



PLANNING DEMOCRACY

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

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"THE AGE" PLANNING EDITORIAL

The Age's Editorial of 4 September was titled "Labor's proposed planning changes are shortsighted and need a rethink". It said proposed changes to planning laws will curtail the right of residents to challenge developments in their street. On the other hand, developers will still be able to appeal a council decision that goes against them. Heads, we win. Tails, you lose.

According to The Age, councils would no longer, as a given, have to consider "neighbourhood character" in a planning application. The Age says the proposed changes 'make a mockery of the government's mission statement that in formulating a plan "to reimagine the future of our cities, suburbs, towns, and regions, it is engaging with the broader community".'

The Age says "The proposal is shortsighted and treats with disdain one rather large section of the community: residents. Once something is gone, it is gone forever. Change the street, then you change its character".

STATE GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR ACTIVITY CENTRES

Heritage Custodian residents in Camberwell are urging Victorian residents to have their say about the 10 Activity Centres proposed by the State Government. They say 3-6 storey apartment blocks can go up in any street in the Centres, which will negatively impact intact heritage streetscapes, with the heritage protection framework being watered down to allow this.

"About one third of Boroondara's wonderful heritage homes and the streets they are on, could be impacted. Across Camberwell, Hawthorn East, Hawthorn and Canterbury 4500 of its best and most significant heritage homes are at risk. An estimated 25 Heritage Precincts and a further 62 Individually Significant buildings are within the catchment."

"The 'one size fits all' approach to heritage, the character of any Neighbourhood Residential Zone and planning of urban living in Melbourne will destroy much of the heritage and the neighbourhoods that make Melbourne a great city that its population loves to live in". "Victoria's cultural heritage should be retained, and surely communities and heritage experts and peak bodies should have a seat at the table before these changes are made? We understand that no heritage bodies have been consulted". Residents of Victoria can have their say about the 10 Activity Centres at this link - engage.vic.gov.au/activitycentres.

Camberwell residents quote the late Mary Drost as saying that European cities look after their heritage buildings and would never tear them down for high rise as is being done in Melbourne.

A City of Boroondara media release is at - <https://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/your-council/news-and-media/boroondara-news/councils-response-state-governments-lates-t-plan-camberwell-junction-activity-centre>.

Monica Kerlin and other residents of Hampton and Bayside are also concerned about the Victorian Government's plans for Activity Centres and to override local Heritage Overlays. They would welcome support and interest from others involved in heritage protection and Activity Centres, who may wish to work with them on this issue. Monica can be contacted on monica.kerlin@icloud.com.



Examples of 6 storey developments that the government website says will be suitable in heritage precinct streets.

MICHAEL BUXTON AND DAVID HAYWARD OPINION PIECE

Michael Buxton and David Hayward are Emeritus Professors at RMIT University. The Age published an Opinion Piece from them on 7 August titled "The great housing con is turning Melbourne into an Asian-style megacity".

In it they say "The Government has embarked on a quarter-century-long project to demolish much of the existing urban area and build a new city of high and medium-rise apartments.

This is a city-rebuilding model familiar in Asian, particularly Chinese, megacities... The government has embraced the autocratic elements of this model, while imposing Australia's most radical land-use planning deregulation to empower the development industry".

"There is no 'missing middle' of housing supply. Massive redevelopment has already occurred in the 13 middle-ring suburbs generally extending between 5 and 15 kilometres from the CBD".
"The Government should ensure that developers build on sites already released instead of proposing unrealistic new housing targets".



GRENFELL FIRE

The Grenfell Tower fire in London, 2017, killed 72 people, 18 of them children. A multi-year Government Inquiry into the fire has exposed the cosy relationship between regulators and building companies that allowed highly combustible materials to be installed on high-rise buildings. It found that the "choice of combustible materials for the cladding of Grenfell Tower resulted from a series of errors caused by the incompetence of the organisations and individuals involved in the refurbishment ... One very significant reason why Grenfell Tower came to be clad in combustible materials was systematic dishonesty on the part of those who made and sold the rain-screen cladding panels. They engaged in deliberate and sustained strategies to manipulate the testing processes, misrepresent test data and mislead the market".

The survivors group, Grenfell United, called for **"a government with the power and ability to separate itself from the construction industry and corporate lobbying, putting people before profit"**.

TREE CANOPY COVER

I reported in Report 42 that I had written to Melbourne's metropolitan Councils to ask them about their tree canopy policies and data. I was essentially doing a fact check on the data used by YIMBY Melbourne in their Tree Canopy Cover Report.

I have now received information from Bayside, Boroondara, Brimbank, Glen Eira, Kingston, Manningham, Maroondah, Merri-bek, Monash, Moonee Valley, Port Phillip, Whitehorse, and Yarra. The information was detailed and useful. If anyone wants to obtain details concerning any of these municipalities, let me know, and I will provide it to you.

In no cases did their data match the YIMBY Melbourne data, and in almost every case the YIMBY data over-stated our current tree canopy levels. For example, the YIMBY figure for Bayside is 30.87%, whereas Bayside's own figure is 20.86%. This leaves open the question of how YIMBY Melbourne arrived at their figures – they haven't disclosed this – and a related question as to why media publish this information without bothering to fact check it.

The Councils which answered my question about whether YIMBY Melbourne had bothered to check their ideas with them, given that Councils are key to planting on nature strips etc, said that they had not. Maribyrnong observed that "The pursuit of public open space to replace tree loss, in particular our urban parks, is not ideal as it does not reflect the many uses of these spaces, nor does it recognize that these spaces already provide a significant cooling effect".

The good news is that Councils all appear to have strong tree canopy cover policies and targets. If they can be met, Melbourne will be the better for it. Boroondara has updated its Tree Canopy Strategy and its Urban Biodiversity Strategy. They are being presented to Council's Services Delegated Committee Meeting on Monday 9 September from 6.30pm for consideration.

LIVEABLE VICTORIA MANIFESTO

The Kingston Residents Association and the Friends of The Grange have endorsed the Liveable Victoria Manifesto, bringing the total number of group endorsements to 28.

KINGSTON RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Rosemary West has informed me that the Kingston Residents Association has secured a meeting with the Planning Minister, Sonya Kilkenny, on 10 October, to discuss a number of planning issues. The KRA has also done a submission to the current Plan Victoria consultation.



FRIENDS OF QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET INC.

QUEEN VICTORIA MARKET

The Victorian Government has approved the three high-rise towers overlooking the Queen Victoria Market known as "Gurrowa Place". As readers will know, this project is now the subject of assessment by the Federal Government under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act given its potential impact on the heritage values of the Market. As a result, work on the project has stalled.

The National Trust has told the Melbourne City Council's Future Melbourne Committee that "the proposal for Towers 1,2 and 3 in its current form is an unacceptable design on heritage grounds due to the tall wall effect and the overwhelming nature the development would have on the site".

Mary-Lou Howie from Friends of Queen Victoria Market also made a submission to the Future Melbourne Committee Draft Heritage Strategy. She said the document paid "lip service to cultural heritage, while the Council destroys one of the most distinctive heritage places in Melbourne, Queen Victoria Market".

HERITAGE MATTERS - CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM

B. McNicholas Heritage Matters campaign has been actively engaging with the Melbourne City Council's Future Melbourne Committee to try to have Cultural Heritage Tourism treated more seriously. She did a submission to Agenda Item 6.8, 20 August, "Experience Melbourne 2028: A Destination management Plan for Melbourne's Visitor Economy". Her submission pointed out that "Cultural and historical travel accounts for 40% of all tourism globally", and said the Council Report failed to focus on the potential of cultural and heritage tourism. In particular, the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, Melbourne Observatory, and Queen Victoria Market, were being neglected.

She also did a submission concerning Agenda Item 6.3, "Draft Melbourne Heritage Strategy", making points about governance, consultation, staffing, and the importance of the Melbourne Observatory, Queen Victoria Market, and Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens.

PLANNING DEMOCRACY PRESENTATION

I will be doing a presentation concerning the work of Planning Democracy to the Deepdene University of the Third Age (U3A) at Balwyn Park Centre, 206A Whitehorse Rd Balwyn, Wednesday 30 October commencing 4.30pm. Thanks to Ian Hundley for arranging this.



CITY OF MELBOURNE DRAFT HOUSING TARGETS

B. Mc Nicholas did a submission to the City of Melbourne's Future Melbourne Committee concerning the shortcomings of the State Government's Housing Targets. Her concerns were amplified by Cr. Rohan Leppert, who told the Committee that "It should be a massive consultation with all Victorians, but that is not what has evolved"... "Council and the public have none of the detail requested, including on heritage protected places and overlays"...

"When matters are kept in the dark you do not bring people with you... basic information should be public and they are not, and that is disgraceful".

I also did a Submission to the City of Melbourne concerning this issue, making the points about housing targets that I set out in Report No.42.

FRANKSTON TOWER APPROVED



The Planning Minister has approved a 14 storey residential tower at 11 Beach St Frankston.

The Beach St tower is one block north east of the "Great Wall of Frankston", a stretch of land between the Nepean Highway and Kananook Creek, where other 14 storey towers are planned. The land area of the block is just 824 square metres.

ENGAGE VICTORIA

Tess Lynch has been using the Engage Victoria website to make a submission concerning the lack of protection for mature trees on private properties - an issue raised by Monash City Council. The webpage is <https://engage.vic.gov.au/shape-our-victoria>.



The Combined Residents of Whitehorse Action Groups (CROWAG) are supporting the campaign for the Box Hill Federation Brickworks site to become public open space. You can support this cause by signing the Petition **"Save the last greenfield site in Box Hill for Parkland"** at change.org.

And nominations are now open for CROWAG Volunteer Awards. For more details and a nomination form go to <https://www.crowag.com/volunteer-award>. Nominations close 15 September.



POST GROWTH APPROACH TO URBAN PLANNING

Michael Bayliss has conducted an in depth interview with Professor Michael Buxton titled "A Post Growth Approach to Urban Planning". It is a Podcast by Post-Growth Australia Podcast, which you can find on Apple Podcast, or by contacting Sustainable Population Australia.

HOUSING CRISIS IS NOT A SUPPLY ISSUE

Macrobusiness has again called out the myth that our housing crisis is a supply issue. In fact, we have one of the largest construction workforces in the world relative to our population. Economist Tarric Brooker says, "Australia completes more homes per capita than almost anywhere in the developed world. When the population is constantly grown at such a large rate, even a world beating level of construction still can't keep up".

MEETING HOUSING TARGETS WILL CREATE HOTTER CITIES

ANU Professor Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick says "There's this focus now on higher-density housing, that don't have green areas and aren't equipped to keep the residents cool, and we're putting those people at greater risk..." "Our hospitals are already stretched. We've got a long way to go to make sure we're (ready) for these types of events". (Macrobusiness 28 August).

HOUSING INQUIRIES MAKE THINGS WORSE

Macrobusiness notes that this century we've had the Menzies Research Centre: Prime Ministerial Taskforce on Home Ownership (2003), the Productivity Commission's First Home Ownership Report (2004), Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia (2008), Western Australia's Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-2020, the COAG Review of Capital City Strategic Planning Systems Report (2011) and report on Housing Supply and Affordability Reform (2012), the Senate Inquiry into Affordable Housing (2014-2015), Parliamentary Inquiry into Home Ownership (2015), and House of Representatives Standing Committee on Tax and Revenue Inquiry into housing affordability and supply in Australia (2022).

The NHSC has done numerous State of Supply reports, and our so called "think tanks" have done lots of reports as well. Back in the real world, housing affordability has continued to decline relentlessly, and rents have shot ahead of inflation, leading it and driving it.

But as in Groundhog Day, there is yet another Inquiry, with Coalition Senator Bragg saying he wants to make it easier for banks to lend money for housing. He wants to water down the responsible lending rules. How providing more credit to home borrowers will do anything other than drive prices even higher is not clear.

These Inquiries are a con – intended to create the appearance of compassion and action, while house prices continue on their merry way, and our young people in particular are locked out.

MICRO-APARTMENTS

Recently the ABC reported on an occupational therapist moving, with her daughter, into a Sydney apartment of about 25 square metres. One might expect that this would be a story of outrage – that in the 21st century a University trained professional woman with a child can only afford 25 square metres. But no, the ABC report was essentially triumphal – describing these modern slums as a "more flexible accommodation solution".

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TURNS OUT TO BE UNAFFORDABLE

Michael Pascoe, writing for Michael West media, has blown the whistle on the high density hubs being built in Sydney. Developers had promised that they would include "up to 15% affordable housing". I imagine readers will know what comes next. The "up to" 15% has turned out to be 3% in Bankstown, Kellyville and Bella Vista. Homebush and Hornsby have 5%, and Crows Nest and Macquarie Park have 10%. The "up to 15%" was spin – a figleaf for the developers' real intentions.

Michael Pascoe says only direct government development will provide genuinely affordable housing. I have come to the same conclusion. If Governments are fair dinkum about affordable housing, they should build some.

SAVE WESTERNPORT

Neil Daly has started a Petition "Save Western Port: Protect Its Environment and Biodiversity from Urban Sprawl". You can read more and sign the petition here:
<https://chng.it/9vvvRjBkJW>.



KILMORE NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACE OF LAST RESORT

Ian Stewart from the Kilmore and District Residents and Ratepayers Association (KADRRRA) has written to the Mitchell Shire about the plan to relocate Kilmore's "Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort" to the J.J. Clancy Football Oval.

He is concerned about this alternative, describing it as unrealistic, inadequate and unworkable. He says that during the 2009 and 2014 bushfires, this Oval was fully utilized by emergency services vehicles. He also says that the Reserve can cater for 200 cars, which is quite inadequate for an influx like those of 2009 and 2014.

He has asked Council to review this decision, and to engage the community in doing so.

NATIONAL TRUST SUPPORTS GREEN WEDGES

The National Trust has come out in support of Green Wedges in an article titled "Why our Green Wedge Zones need protection". It says "The National Trust fully supports the state government to increase tree and urban green spaces. However, there is a clear misalignment of this intention and the implementation planning for housing targets being drafted in the current plan for Victoria. The need for increased housing density to accommodate future population will increase pressures on our existing green spaces. As a minimum, current green space benchmarks must be maintained as we face a changing climate".

HUME PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENT C263.

Peter Gavin has been engaging with Hume Council over Planning Scheme Amendment C263, which opens the door to high rise in the until now rural town of Sunbury.

If the concerns of submitters are not resolved, they are referred to an independent planning panel appointed by the Minister for Planning. If the Panel is required, it will have a Directions Hearing on 7 October and a Panel Hearing in the week commencing 11 November.

HERRING ISLAND

Parks Victoria has been reviewing access to Herring Island. Nina Earl has urged Parks Victoria to maintain restricted access to Herring Island, to maintain it as a refuge for nature, and as an educational resource.



GREENVALE RESERVOIR STILL CLOSED

The Age reports that Greenvale residents are dismayed that the land around the southern banks of the Greenvale Reservoir remains closed to the public – "A decade on, waterside park still off limits", Adam Carey, 10 August.

It used to be open to the public – I sometimes went there myself – but was closed in 2014 for works to strengthen the dam wall. That work was done years ago, but for reasons that are unclear, the southern area remains closed to the public. A new housing estate is being planned for just north of the reservoir, with 380 lots. If reopening the open space is a matter of money, perhaps the developers of the 380 lots, or their "open space contributions", could bankroll it. Thanks to Ian Hundley for passing this one on.



MARIBYRNONG RIVER AND WATERWAYS ASSOCIATION

Helen Van Den Berg, who has a long and impressive track record of campaigning on behalf of the Maribyrnong River and its tributaries, has fittingly been named as the first Chair of the new Maribyrnong River and Waterways Association. The Association is working on environmental flows, implementing the Waterways of the West Action Plan, water literacy education, and a microplastics audit, among other things.

RESIDENTS 3000

Residents 3000 are encouraging CBD residents to learn about Amendment C432, the Municipal Planning Strategy which establishes the overarching strategic planning policy for the city. To learn about the strategy and proposed updates, visit participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/amendment-c432. Submissions close on 16 September.

MOONEE VALLEY CLIMATE ACTION GRANTS

Moonee Valley Council has opened applications for its Climate Action Grants. Eligible projects can apply for one of Council's 3 Climate Action grant streams – Community Energy Transition - \$10,000, Urban Greening and Climate Resilience - \$2000, and Business Energy Transition - \$5000. You can find out more about the grants and how to apply on Council's website. Applications close at 5pm, Sunday 29 September.

NORMAN LODGE GATEHOUSE

The heritage-listed Norman Lodge Gatehouse on Nepean Highway, Mount Eliza, faces demolition. The Norman Lodge estate is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register, which says it "is significant to the history and development of Victoria and is protected by law".

However, the gatehouse has fallen into disrepair over the past decade. It was badly damaged by a large eucalypt falling on it in April. Heritage Victoria is working with the Council's municipal surveyor concerning the building's future.

Steve Karakitsos, from the South Eastern Centre for Sustainability, says "Too much cultural and early-settler heritage has been lost, in no small part, to well-meaning yet, often incompetent, organisations which are unable to effectively deal with wily developers who know how to manipulate the system for their personal benefit. The Norman Lodge Gatehouse must be preserved at all costs".

ANOTHER CHILD CARE CENTRE FOR MAROONDAH

Liz Sanzaro from the Croydon Conservation Society reports that a developer wants to build a child care centre in Waters Grove Heathmont. We all love Child Care Centres, but there are already 8 nearby. Furthermore, the sector is short of qualified staff. There is little point building new Centres while the existing ones can't be properly staffed.

The Council rejected the application due to the number of trees on the site that would be chopped down if it proceeds. The developer has taken the matter to VCAT, with a Hearing set for later this month.

COUNCIL INTEGRITY STANDARDS

The State Government passed amendments to the Local Government Act in June intended to enhance governance and integrity standards in Victoria's 79 Councils. They will come into force following the next Council elections. The changes provide stronger sanctions for Councillor misconduct and processes to resolve conduct matters earlier.

E-SCOOTERS

The City of Melbourne has banned them, but the Cities of Merri-bek, Darebin and Moonee Valley are motoring on with e-scooter trials. I'm not sure that they would be if they had to foot the health bill. In December last year the Royal Melbourne Hospital reported that over 200 e-scooter riders had attended its emergency department with injuries in 2022. "Electric scooter usage, as observed through patient presentations to the Royal Melbourne Hospital, is associated with a considerable number of injuries, primarily among young males, and an ensuing economic burden".

The Brunswick Residents Network reports that a study from Lisbon which looked at the economics found that while shared e-scooters do generate benefits, these are highly overshadowed by their safety issues – almost 6 million euro in annual costs.

RIVER RED GUMS IN NOBLE PARK

Gaye Guest is opposing plans by developers to remove 100-200 year old River Red Gums at 51A Douglas St Noble Park. She says the River Red Gums put the "Park" in "Noble Park". Our children will never see magnificent trees like these in their lifetime.

Gaye says an agreement with the developer to remove a tree in exchange for a \$155,000 offset to Council for tree planting in Noble Park shortchanges residents and the environment.

She disputes claims that a tower of less than 6 storeys would not be viable. "When Noble Park is completely built out, where will we see greening?"

COMING EVENTS

Thursday 12 September – 6pm.

Royal Exhibition Building
Dome Promenade Evening Tour.
Members \$25, General \$29.
Book on the Museums Victoria website.

Saturday 14 September – 10am-4pm.

Zero Waste Festival. Federation Square,
Swanston and Flinders St Melbourne.

Sunday 15 September - 2pm.

Boroondara Council Community Forum
re State Government planning changes.
Hawthorn Town Hall.

Monday 26 September – 7pm – 10pm.

Why Dominant Birds Flourish. A Moonee Valley Sustainability webinar with Dr. Jacinta Humphrey, looking at the Noisy Miner problem. To register, go on the Moonee Valley Sustainability Website.

Sunday 6 October – 1pm – 4pm.

Spring Garden Day at La Trobe's Cottage.
Celebrate Spring with tours of the beautiful La Trobe's Cottage garden.



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