



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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COUNCIL RESPONDS TO PLANNING SCHEME SUBMISSIONS

On 2 March Whitehorse City Council formally responded to public comment on the draft planning scheme when they received the officer's report and adopted proposed changes. These will be submitted to a panel (which doubles as an advisory committee), possibly around July-August. Extensive changes are proposed to the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS), the Local Guidelines for Medium Density Housing and to a number of other parts of the draft scheme. If you made a submission you will be advised in due course about these changes, given details of arrangements for the public hearing and invited to make a presentation to the panel.

You should not accept that the proposed changes will be incorporated in the scheme. You should reserve your right to agree or disagree with Council's proposals, in person or by representation, at the panel hearing.

DEVELOP OR BUST !

Developers have been moving across Melbourne in a sort of feeding frenzy. After consuming former school and industrial sites the single suburban block has become more vulnerable. In 1997 Whitehorse saw 25% more planning applications than in 1996, mostly for multi-unit dwellings, many of which were inappropriate.

With the State's Advisory Committee on the new Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP), we can hopefully look forward to a change of attitude (which doesn't have to wait for the introduction of the new format planning schemes). The Committee reported late last year that, *'In the past, many councils have had an attitude that if a use is a Section 2 use (permit required) there is an implication by virtue of this favouring the grant of a permit, if applied for, unless there are very strong reasons to the contrary. Under the VPP, any prejudice in favour of saying 'yes' is removed.'*

Whitehorse Council has recently shown signs of curbing the appetites of the more predatory developers and the Minister has recently acknowledged resident concerns, announcing 'initiatives' for more local input, the practical outcomes of which are still to be tested. But don't relax ! If Blackburn is to keep any semblance of its distinctive character you must keep registering your concerns - and objecting to any development detrimental to your neighbourhood.

NB: If you are canvassing objections against a proposed development you are welcome to borrow our disc of Council's s57 objection form.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

We are pleased to welcome Bernadette Cahill and Ian Swann to the Committee and the appointment of David Morrison as Hon. Treasurer. David will take over that office from Malcolm Anderson, who has undertaken this responsible task since 1990.

SERVICE STATION ACCESS - TO BE OR NOT TO BE ?

We were concerned at the unannounced closure last December, after a period of 35 years, of access to the shopping centre car park from the former Caltex Service Station on Blackburn Road. While acting within their rights, we would not have expected Ampol to wait three months before posting a notice announcing the reason for the closure. We have made it clear to Council that whatever plans might emerge for commercial development, they should include integration with the shopping centre by restoring that long term access.

A USEFUL REFERENCE - BUT NOT FOR OUR CITIZENS !

Butterworths Planning & Environment Service, a guide to Victorian planning and environmental legislation with notes on practical application, comes in the form of continually updated loose leaf manuals. The cost of the *Service* is beyond the BVRG and most residents - but not, we had hoped, beyond the resources of a Library designed to serve an adult population of over 200,000. By no means intended as light reading the *Service* would, in our view, have been a useful research reference for the many individuals and groups concerned with planning and environmental issues, perhaps as objectors or Tribunal appellants.

However, our requests have been rejected, as was an alternative suggestion that the public might have access to the *Service* through the planning department. Apparently Council have another 'information provider' and would prefer the planning staff to be used as they 'are able to provide proper information'. While we commend the service provided by most of the staff, most of the time, it is not hard to imagine situations where that information might be less than comprehensive. For residents unable to afford professional assistance, or who have difficulty attending Council during office hours, the decision is regretted.

Vale: Greig Brown : It is with regret that we record the death, on 20 November 1997, of Greig Brown, Hon. Treasurer of the Group from May 1987 until November 1990.

Greig is also remembered for the key role he played in the major survey of every third household in Blackburn, which formed a significant part of the BVRG submission to the 1989 panel hearing on the proposed major shopping complex.