



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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BULLETIN No 32

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END OF CENTURY DINNER



FRIDAY 19 NOVEMBER 1999

7.15 for 7.30

Join us for this last BVRG Dinner before the start of the new millennium or (if you believe that isn't until 2001) perhaps the last but one! Either way, it's an excuse to meet and exchange views with others at a relaxed informal function.

This time at a new venue, *La Promenade Blackburn* at 21 Salisbury Avenue, which we have reserved for our sole use that evening.

The venue has a BYO licence and we have arranged for a four course menu, with alternative dishes, for \$22. **Accommodation is limited and we must therefore accept bookings in order of receipt - so book early to avoid disappointment.**

RSVP by Sunday 14 November Ron Grainger 9877 3348 or Ian Swann 9877 7084

TIDYING UP THE PLANNING SCHEME

We have discussed with Council the need to amend the Scheme where anomalies have occurred or errors appeared as the result of the major redrafting required by the new standardised format. Some of the proposed changes relate to the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) and some to controls eg. overlays for the former Special Residential Zone

We have also registered our concerns about omissions or a change of emphasis in the new versions of the Tree Policy and the Blackburn Office Policy as well as the disturbing absence of formal requirements for major developments to contribute to open space. It is expected that these matters will be considered early next year as possible amendments to the Scheme, which will follow the usual process of public exhibition and comment.

'THE FUTURE OF OUR SUBURBS'

"On the face of it, the introduction of a statewide development guide makes some sort of sense. Unfortunatel, the anticipated benefits of reducing delay, costs and administration have failed to materialise. Instead, proponents, councils and residents continue to endlessly argue about whether or not a proposal is consistent with the predominant character of the area surrounding the site. In effect, we have replaced a set of (prescriptive) local controls, with a more complex suite of controls, the meaning of which is debated every day of the week at the Tribunal". John Glossop, Town Planner, commenting on the *The Good Design Guide* at 'The Future of our Suburbs' Conference.

Arranged by Melbourne University's Faculty of Architecture in association with SOS, this Conference was held at the University on 9 & 10 October. Many resident groups, including the BVRG, were represented, as were others with a special interest in urban planning. These included some councillors - though not from Whitehorse.

A wide range of speakers, including planners, academics and lawyers, reviewed the economic, political and social pressures on the traditional suburbs and explored ways in which change might be accommodated without destroying their most attractive features.

HERITAGE REVISITED

As reported previously, Council took up our recommendation that Heritage Studies should not end with the present amendment, which proposes inclusion in the Scheme of buildings and areas already reviewed.

A further heritage survey east of Middleborough Road will assess historical features not previously reviewed. So if you know of any buildings, structures, streetscapes or natural features which you believe to be of historical significance let Council, and/or your local Councillor, know. We suggest that your referral be in writing, giving as many relevant details as possible.

A good example of a property which encapsulates something of Blackburn's history is Rob's Cycle and Sports Shop, cited in the present Heritage Review. Most of us are now aware that it has not just closed because its long time and well known owner, George Robinson, has retired, but because parts of the building had become unsafe.

What had originally been a late Victorian double fronted timber house was successively altered and used for refreshment rooms and, from 1913, as the local post office. After the new post office opened in Chapel Street in 1951 the premises were used as a branch of the ES&A Bank until 1956, when George Robinson moved his business there from the other side of Blackburn Road.

We hope that something of this significant structure can be retained in situ as such visible links with local heritage are rightly receiving more attention.

HOUSING STUDY

We mentioned in the last *Bulletin* that this had been delayed while Council awaited a Planning Provision Practice Note. However, just prior to the election, the Minister authorised Council to make a start on the study before a Practice Note had been issued.

Demographic information and relevant statistics are therefore being obtained prior to developing drafts for community comment. Given the period of uncertainty following the election, further delays might well be expected as the Department awaits directions from new political masters. In any case it might be well into the new year before residents have a chance to participate in shaping future plans for housing in Whitehorse.

INTERNET INFORMATION

While the internet is not readily accessible to all, it is worth noting that Whitehorse Council incorporates planning notes on their site, www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au as well as Council Agenda (in summary form only) and Minutes. However, agenda are not always available before hard copies are placed in the Libraries. And as yet it is necessary to see those hard copies for detailed reports, plans and other graphics - especially if you are interested in a permit application.

On the subject of websites, that for the Department of Infrastructure is www.doi.vic.gov.au and for SOS www.creativeaccess.com.au/sos.

RETROSPECT...

In the last *Bulletin* for this century the BVRG looks back on almost twelve years of hard graft in defence of our residential environment. Much of Blackburn's special character has been eroded in that time but hopefully sufficient remains to ensure that it will avoid transformation into some form of featureless stereotype suburb. Some of the credit for that is due to the efforts of this Group whose strength is, after all, in you as it's supporters.

Certainly, had you all sat back and accepted that there was nothing that could be done to stop unsympathetic development there would have been a lot more of it about by now! The BVRG has helped channel some of your concerns and made Council realise that they were dealing with a community prepared to question the quality of proposed change.

This has sometimes meant making submissions and representations at levels higher than local government, especially in recent years. The amalgamation of municipalities, combined with legislative and administrative changes, unfortunately led to losses in the corporate memory of Councils. Only now is a start being made to acknowledge and regain some of that important local knowledge.

And finally (while the exercise is still far from complete) the main benefit of recent planning reforms has been to force Councils' to base their urban planning on considered and committed strategies, and to publicly monitor and review the results.

...AND PROSPECT

Urban planning was undoubtedly one of the key issues considered by voters in the recent State election. Recognition of shortcomings led to the usual promises by both major parties of a better planning future for residents. They undertook to review some of the worst features of the present planning process such as demolition permits, approvals by private surveyors and impediments to community involvement in the consultation and appeal processes. Hopefully the close election results will serve to remind all politicians that they ignore promises at their peril.

But regardless of what the future holds in the way of changes in legislation and regulation the same players will remain on the planning stage in the next century. For the ordinary resident constant vigilance, and a determination to defend their home environment, will still be essential.

Likewise the BVRG can only continue to influence the process while it can demonstrate the active support of local residents. Recent arrivals to Blackburn must be convinced that retaining the amenity they have chosen depends on individual and collective involvement in planning issues. You can help by passing on that message, perhaps by giving a copy of the *Bulletin* to new residents who might be interested in joining the Group.

COMMITTEE

We previously recorded our sincere thanks to Malcolm Anderson for his service as Hon. Treasurer, from 1990 to 1998. We now repeat those thanks as we wish him well on his resignation from the Committee as at the end of this year.

Malcolm's resignation increases the need for new members on the Committee - please contact us if you are interested in helping out.

GREETINGS

The Committee extends best wishes to all members and their families for a happy Christmas - and a safe and happy introduction to the new century.

POSTSCRIPT

Thanks to all those who have paid their subscription (and in some cases made a donation). We enclose a receipt where appropriate.

If you have not yet made your contribution a reminder notice is enclosed. Please ignore this if your cheque is in the mail.