



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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A NEW PLANNING AGENDA

Minister John Thwaites announced a number of initiatives when launching the 'Agenda' on 13 December. Not least are those empowering local government to take a more decisive role in planning while at the same time placing constraints on Ministerial power to intervene in individual planning and heritage matters.

He also announced that a comprehensive code to apply to all residential development will be introduced this year and that a number of practice notes would be issued to clarify the planning process. Some of these were probably at least in embryonic form during the time of the last government, when the unpopularity of the planning system was finally recognised by all parties. Several notes were issued at the end of 1999 - including - at long last - a more common sense approach to accessibility of planning documents. The latter states that all impediments which might delay or prevent a person obtaining relevant information about a proposal should be removed.

Council's statutory planner has adopted the measures recommended in the note. That is, notice will be given to applicants of the possible copying of permit application documents, including plans, site analysis, etc. and notice will be given to users limiting their use to that specific application. (In effect you will now be able to obtain copies of the proposal and to take these home and have time to review it in the context of your neighbourhood).

Please let us know if you experience any undue difficulties in obtaining copies to study.

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Blackburn is now located in one (Central) ward rather than being divided among four, and is the favoured ward of a number of candidates. The real test for these candidates is whether they are prepared to do more than court popularity by making exorbitant promises. What most residents want from their representatives is an assurance that they will help them obtain a fair hearing on all matters civic and will, on their behalf, properly scrutinise the quality, availability and cost of services, not least planning.

Town planning is increasingly important now that Councils are to take more responsibility for decisions affecting a wider range of developments (see above). A diligent Councillor will no longer be able to rely solely on the professional staff, even though they must remain the principle source of planning advice. Councillors will need a wider appreciation of, and greater involvement in, planning issues. It is work for which they will seldom receive public acclaim but which will make a real contribution to the welfare of their constituents.

Authorised and printed by R.Grainger, 25 Main Street, Blackburn 3130

FAVOURITE TIMES

Weekends and holidays are favoured by those who hope to avoid planning controls. They know Council officers are unlikely to be around and are therefore opportune times to demolish buildings or remove trees. The results can be argued about afterwards. The end of year holiday period is also a good time to announce contentious or debatable proposals, the methodology being that most of the community is preoccupied at that time.

Last Christmas - New Year proved no exception. Your Committee has been busy since November reviewing government changes, introduced and pending, and making a submission on the (generally satisfactory) *Heritage Amendment* exhibited by Council. To meet the initial closing date of 31 December the BVRG lodged a response to the Issues and Options Paper prepared by the Advisory Committee considering *Good Design Guide Variations* - the intention that these Variations ultimately apply to Vic Code 1 will make any changes of particular significance given the current paucity of planning controls for single dwellings.

In addition, we submitted comments on the *Blackburn Centre Parking* recommendations which were publicly revealed in mid December. We reminded Council that the views of local residents in affected streets and as users of the centre - in and out of their cars - were of particular relevance. We also pointed out that car parking changes should be considered in conjunction with any proposed under the Morton Park Master Plan.

SUBURBAN BACKLASH - BOOK REVIEW

In this well documented urban history Miles Lewis recounts the endless assaults by various planning authorities, politicians and developers on the Melbourne suburb. Anyone who has experienced the machinations associated with urban planning will appreciate, if not always enjoy, his debunking of some of the popular myths and his descriptions of those breathtaking leaps of logic which resulted in the resident finishing up with the rough end of the pineapple.

By tracing the residential growth of Melbourne since the 1830's he puts the urban planning scene in perspective while scrutinising the specious theories advanced by 'experts' and politicians to justify some of the inequitable impositions on the suburban dweller. The text is well supported with maps, tables and photos and Dr Lewis brings the story right up to date with his account of the rise of the resident action groups and their political impact.

He acknowledges his involvement with SOS - and the fact that the organisation benefits from sales of his book. However, it clearly reflects his own views on the Melbourne suburb and the challenges they have faced - and still face. For the concerned suburbanite, it certainly helps identify and clarify many of the elements which have contributed to an often confusing planning scene.

Copies are obtainable (postage free) by sending a cheque for \$35 together with your name address and contact phone number, to Save Our Suburbs Inc., PO Box 5042Y, Melbourne, 3000

MEETING ATTENDANCE

Members are welcome to attend meetings of the Committee. These are invariably held in private homes. If you wish to attend a future meeting please 9877 3348.

BYRON TROY

We regret having to announce the retirement from the Committee of Byron Troy. Byron joined the Committee in November 1994 and served as Chairman from May 1996. While other commitments have forced his resignation from the Committee his support remains - as do his (unattributed) comments on returning from work into our tree covered area which are enshrined in a 1995 consultant's report on local values "*When I turn into Blackburn Road I feel home*".

We shall miss his ability to cut to the core of a problem and to help us finish Committee meetings in record time !

LESS CONVENIENT ?

While the centre now boasts a new convenience in the form of a super-100 hopes that the old Caltex site in Blackburn Road might be reincarnated as an *IGA Everyday Supermarket* are fading. Advertised for sale, subject to an 'all clear' on contamination, the site might eventually be redeveloped as any one of a number of commercial/retail premises. In our view none of these would prove as convenient to residents as would a petrol outlet combined with a store carrying grocery items no longer available locally.

Pending declared intentions for the site our preference remains for integration with the existing retail centre via vehicular access to the car park.

HOUSING STUDY

We are still unable to say when the community might be involved in this important Study - or indeed when a start will be made on a number of other planning projects. These delays are in large part a legacy of underresourced strategic planning combined with irresolute guidance from the Department.

Until densities and other controls are incorporated in the Planning Scheme, in itself a lengthy process, all residential areas remain vulnerable to inappropriate development. One of the challenges for the new Council will be to help identify and clear the logjams so that the process can commence.

THE HERITAGE AMENDMENT

It is probable that Council will seek a panel hearing in order to review and make recommendations on the proposed Heritage Amendment exhibited last November. All those who made submissions will be notified if and when that is to be held.

As indicated earlier, the BVRG was generally in favour of the exhibited document. With only minor improvements, this will hopefully serve as a practical framework for the studies identified by Council on heritage features other than built form and on all features east of Middleborough Road.

<p>NEW NEIGHBOURS INTERESTED ? SHARE THIS BULLETIN WITH THEM - ARRANGE FOR US TO CONTACT</p>
