



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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PANEL HEARING ON BLACKBURN OFFICE ZONE

The most recent major challenge to the quality of life enjoyed by the residents of Blackburn is about to reach its climax. On 24, 25 and 26th March a Panel Hearing will be held into whether or not the proposal by Nunawading Council that virtually the whole area between Blackburn station and Whitehorse Road should be turned over to office development. The Hearing will be conducted in rooms at the Nunawading Council. Be there and give voice to your views.

The Proposals Revisited

The proposal is to devote all the land bounded by the railway, Whitehorse Road, Chapel Street and Queen Street to offices. This represents some 45,000 square metres of office space. That amounts to ten times the space allocated to the proposed new shopping centre, approved a few years ago.

Council once had a draft Structure Plan for Blackburn, which it trotted out and then very quickly trotted in again. A vision which we should all have been able to think and talk about for a while was blurred by a new set of dollar signs flashing in the eyes of Council planners. The failure to get the fancy broad-acre office development at Tally Ho up and running meant that Blackburn had to pick up the tab. Office space that won't sell in Tally Ho is expected to sell in Blackburn. But only if Blackburn's 'image' is changed from the village character we residents have cherished to what Council calls 'the market's perception of Blackburn's office identity'. Blackburn's office identity?

DO YOU WANT BLACKBURN'S LOCAL VILLAGE CHARACTER TO CHANGE FOREVER INTO A REGIONALLY BASED 'OFFICE IDENTITY'.

Think, for example, about the shops. Do you want to see the butchers in South Parade convert to office supply services or fast food outlets for office workers? Ask whether a Council who have failed to make Tally Ho a going concern should be allowed to experiment with Blackburn.

What could be done?

Nobody now needs to be reminded that office space is spilling out of Melbourne's ears. The Central Business District has a 25% vacant occupancy rate. The City of Nunawading has the highest vacant occupancy rate in Melbourne. So how does Council tackle this problem? By wanting to zone more land for offices.

The Victorian Government have been telling us for years that Melbourne has been spreading outwards too quickly, devouring good agricultural and recreational land. They also tell us that medium to high density housing should be concentrated near public transport and existing facilities and services. Inner and mid-outer Melbourne is short of houses.

How does Nunawading Council respond? By proposing to build offices.

Traffic

We are also told we need to begin curtailing the use of cars. This proposal for offices would dramatically increase the number of cars coming through Blackburn. (Remember, the offices would serve a large region, not just the needs of Blackburn residents.) Last October, a consultant's report predicted an increase of up to 3,500 vehicles per day in the area if the office development were to go ahead. Within a few days some 220 residents had petitioned Nunawading Council to oppose the office zone.

Do YOU want all this traffic from outside rushing through the streets of Blackburn?

Personal Safety

Perhaps you do not walk very often between the station and Whitehorse Road. But plenty of people do - many of them women and children. It is a well established fact throughout the world that areas of cities which 'die' at night and at weekends for lack of residents are major safety hazards. Why else the present push to get more people actually living in central Melbourne? In Blackburn, by replacing housing with offices deserted at these times, we might be replacing a peaceful and safe part of our suburb with a wide public 'image' of Blackburn as a safety risk for women and children.

What you can do

The BVRG will be putting all these concerns to the Panel on your behalf. But we can do

best on the general, strategic town planning arguments. It is vitally important that you voice your own particular concerns in person, in the way you feel best able to talk on your own behalf. In some respects, a Panel Hearing can be daunting. But in our experience, any resident who feels strongly about a threat to their quality of life has always received a sympathetic hearing.

You do not feel you need to be an accomplished or practised public speaker. The Panel is interested primarily in what you have to tell it.

If you have already made a written submission, you will have been invited to address the Panel. If you have not, you may still do so. Attend on the first morning (10 a.m. on 24th March) at Nunawading Council chambers and make your request. Alternatively, you can phone Ms Katrina Tevjung in the strategic planning department of Nunawading Council (262 6352) to make your request.

If you can't be there in person, you can arrange for another to speak on your behalf - by giving them written authority to do so.

If you can be there in person, but do not wish to speak, please make the effort to come along. Your presence will encourage those who do speak and will acquaint the Panel with the the community's interest in this matter.

What we can do for you

We shall do all we can to help you prepare a talk to the Panel and to keep you posted on developments. The BVRG would not exist without your support. We try to honour it by representing you effectively at Panel Hearings, Council meetings and elsewhere.

Please keep our secretary, Ron Grainger, posted about any change of address, and please encourage new neighbours to join the Group. 1992 contributions towards the work of the BVRG would now be gratefully received: \$10 family, \$5 pensioners to Mr M. Anderson, 3 Railway Road, Blackburn.