



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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RESCODE 2000

The Advisory Committee appointed by the current state government to examine the draft residential code, has concluded its report. Their recommendations, made public in mid January, are disappointing in many ways. While it is good to see the philosophical acceptance of Neighbourhood Character as an important element of town planning, the suggested planning overlay conceived by the Committee is not the panacea it is presented to be. It is devoid of amenity requirements and would present all the usual difficulties and delays associated with amending a Scheme.

If a council decided it was appropriate to establish a Neighbourhood Character Overlay it is hoped (but unlikely) that there would be interim controls to prevent developers from getting in before overlay amendments were formally incorporated in the Planning Scheme. Without such a mechanism, and a more expeditious process, an overlay would take so long to investigate, justify and introduce that it would come too late to provide sought for protection.

Another significant recommendation made by the Advisory Committee, relating to Residential 1 Zones, was that councils be able to determine a minimum block size for which planning permits became a requirement. More needs to be considered on how this might be applied and the same reservations apply about the impact if interim controls were not in place.

The Advisory Committee also recommended that Single Dwelling development remain largely as of right but with a reasonable reduction in height limits. Unfortunately, nearly all the proposed standards, while sensible in concept, would remain discretionary, and the extent to which they might be applied could be in the hands of a private surveyor - who could hardly be said to be impartial.

The challenge to government will be to achieve the outcomes recognised in their policy statements as equitable to residents, and not to once again regard the development industry and the planning profession as the predominant beneficiaries of any planning system.

Whether or not they grasp the nettle, a new code is unlikely to be introduced before June, and probably well after, and as it can then be expected to undergo a long introductory period, we can all stop holding our breath.

YOUR COMMITTEE

We welcome Meg Probyn to the Committee and record here names and phone numbers of all committee members should you need to contact them: Bernadette Cahill 9877 7556, Ron Grainger 9877 3348, David Morrison 9894 2531, Meg Probyn 9878 7919, Ian Swann 9877 7084.

STUDY OF SPECIAL CHARACTER AREA - BLACKBURN

At their last meeting in 2000 Council decided to undertake this Study of those areas bordering the Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO) - Blackburn. The purpose of the Study is to investigate and identify areas where vegetation or urban character controls might be appropriate.

Whitehorse Council is expected to advertise for Steering Committee members, including a representative of this Group, the Tree Society, Creeklands Advisory Committee and a resident within the existing SLO area. Two councillors will be included in the Steering Committee as well as council and Department of Infrastructure officers. The role of the Committee will include assisting with drafting the consultants brief, monitoring the progress of the Study and facilitating community consultation.

BVRG has written to Whitehorse Council suggesting that the Study should identify any distinctive characteristics of particular areas within the Study and recommend planning controls for their protection and enhancement. BVRG also reminded council of the 1997 BVRG study of a distinctive area of Central Blackburn which included a comprehensive resident survey and highlighted desirable controls to help maintain and enhance the existing neighbourhood character.

Residents in the study area have an opportunity to make a real difference to the future of their neighbourhood and are encouraged to respond with a strong clear voice when their views are sought.

BROCHURE FOR SLO (NOT DEJA VU)

In last October's *Bulletin* we expressed the hope that by then those of you living in the Blackburn Special Landscape Overlay (SLO) area - the old SRZ - would have received a copy of a brochure outlining the relevant objectives and planning provisions which apply to the area. Whitehorse Council has been very tardy in preparing this important document. Perhaps they could be encouraged to complete the project if community members requested a copy?

Meanwhile council is canvassing community opinion on the identification of the SLO area with street signage. If there is a positive response it might be agreed to erect signs during next financial year. Bearing in mind the long history of the visionary brochure it could be worth including a completion date for this exercise in next year's Corporate Plan, now under review. Watch this space! (or those spaces!).

OLD CALTEX SITE

You will be aware of our long standing concern over the state of this deserted Blackburn Road site and the need to integrate any future development with the centre by restoring access to the car park.

In December we again pressed council to encourage a satisfactory outcome for the area. While we recognise that local government has limited influence over commercial decisions clear evidence of their active interest in the future of the site could be crucial.

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