



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

64 Laburnum Street, Blackburn 3130

Mrs A. Taylor (Sec.)	877 4074
Mrs M. Harrison	877 4351
Mr R. Grainger	877 3348

BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER No. 6

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Public Hearing Completed

As most of you will be aware, the public panel hearing into the proposed shopping centre at Blackburn concluded on 4th July. The hearing continued over six days, during which a vast amount of technical and personal evidence was presented. The panel hoped to complete its report to the Minister for Planning and Environment by the end of July. There will then be a further period during which the Ministry considers this report before making a recommendation to the Minister. The Blackburn Village Residents Group wishes to express its deepest thanks to all those residents who helped us with the research for our submission and to those who over the last few weeks assisted us in meeting the associated costs.

The BVRG Case

The Group made its submission on behalf of over 950 supporters. The main elements of our case were to recommend:

- (1) outright rejection of the application;
- (2) any rezoning or redevelopment to be conditional on recognition of the principal grounds of objection.

In support of those recommendations the Group brought evidence which not only questioned the applicant's evidence concerning viability, traffic and parking but demonstrated the probable adverse effects both on the existing shops and on the distinctive character of the area.

In addition, the Group presented the results of an attitude survey of local residents which covered 631 households (one third of all households in most of Blackburn). These showed an overwhelming 82.5% of local residents opposed to the proposed development.

While professional consultants and lawyers had no part in the preparation or presentation of the BVRG case, the panel acknowledged our written submission as the most significant single document put before them, and accorded our several presenters the dubious distinction of being cross examined as if they were expert witnesses. While the submission was the result of collaborative efforts by a number of people, the BVRG is deeply indebted to the seven members who undertook to present the various chapters. They did so at considerable personal cost and inconvenience. Throughout the proceedings they were heartened by the support of so many individual objectors and we are aware that many of these were only able to make presentations to the Panel after considerable disruption of their personal timetables.

Extent of Support and Opposition

Before the panel hearing began, there were 15 written submissions to the Ministry expressing complete or qualified support for the Stock Constructions proposal. Against this, some 219 submissions opposed it — including one from 22 local traders. 276 individual residents recorded opposition, as against 13 in support.

At the panel hearing itself, 51 presentations were made on behalf of groups or individuals opposed to the development and 6 (other than the applicant) on behalf of those supporting it.

Copies of the Group Submission

We would like to have been able to make copies of the BVRG submission freely available as so many of you contributed, in a variety of ways, to its preparation. Unfortunately, the cost would be prohibitive. However, if any individuals were prepared to meet the cost you could discuss that possibility with Ron Grainger (A.H. 877 3348). We will also be requesting that a copy be placed in the Blackburn Branch Library.

What next?

The panel hearing is over, and there is no way of predicting the outcome of the panel's report. There is, however, still much to be done.

Nunawading Council

Council has not taken community consultation seriously. The BVRG recommended to Council in May of last year that an independent consultant be engaged. Council threw this out, along with many of our other suggestions. Late last year Council did decide to appoint a consultant to report on integration. It was therefore ironic that the consultant said in the panel hearing that, ideally, the best kind of shopping centre for Blackburn would be a smaller, open air cluster of shops — one option we have been recommending all along.

You should take note of what all Councillors state about their position on the shopping centre as well as what they say about their commitment to genuine community consultation. Something will be built on all that cleared land in Gardenia Street. This community wants and deserves to be consulted properly about what is put there.

State Elections

We shall be asking candidates for Box Hill in the coming State Election to make clear their position on the shopping centre. Many of you have already been canvassed on behalf of one candidate — you will be by others. Make your views on the shopping centre absolutely clear in response to surveys. Don't forget that those who support the BVRG's position make up nearly 83% of Blackburn's population.

This is an important local issue — the strength and depth of our view must be made to register in Spring Street. **THE FINAL DECISION ON THE SHOPPING CENTRE APPLICATION IS MADE BY THE MINISTER HIMSELF.**

As a first step, here is what you can do.

- Write to our local member, Mrs Margaret Ray, M.L.A., or telephone her office. The address and phone number are 537 Station Street, Box Hill 3128; Phone 898 6606.
- Write or telephone the Liberal candidate Mrs Helen Shardey. Her campaign office address and phone number are 3 Bank Street, Box Hill 3128; Phone 899 6819.
- Write directly to the Minister for Planning & Environment, Hon. Tom Roper, M.L.A., at 500 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000.