



BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

25 Main Street, Blackburn 3130

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

BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER No. 8

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YOUR SHOPPING CENTRE, YOUR COMMUNITY AND YOUR COUNCIL

This Newsletter brings to you the latest developments on the Blackburn Village shopping centre. It also shows you how the successes that have been achieved over the shopping centre are the result of action that you, as part of the Blackburn community, have helped to achieve; and how, through community action in the elections for Nunawading Council, more can be achieved in the future.

The Shopping Centre Proposals

You will by now know that the Blackburn Village Residents Group at a public meeting endorsed *in principle* the concept of the new proposal for a shopping centre. This proposal meets most of the conditions we laid down at the Panel hearing in 1988 — in particular that it be small, that it be sensitive to the architectural traditions and environmental context of Blackburn, and that it be conceived fundamentally to meet the needs of the local community.

The basic floor plan of the new proposal is reproduced for you overleaf: a cluster of small buildings in a courtyard setting with a moderate sized supermarket as its 'anchor'. We have every reason to believe that the developer and the architect are sincere in their present attempt to create for Blackburn a new and pathfinding concept for local shopping centres in Australia. This is so despite the fact that the proposed development is about 500 square metres larger than we should like to have seen, and that its glassed-in central area is not wholly open to the air.

There remain, nevertheless, certain problems that have yet to be satisfactorily addressed — problems concerned especially with the longer-term economic viability of the proposed centre and the flow of traffic in central Blackburn. This community remains to be satisfied on these important issues, and it may well be that they will have to be thrashed out in the next Panel hearing on the application.

Before that Panel hearing there will be a period in which you will be able to view the new proposal exhibited and to draw your own conclusions. It is in your interest that you examine the plans and reports exhibited and that you communicate your views to the BVRG, the Council or the Ministry for Planning and Environment. (We shall detail how best to do this in a later Newsletter.) The BVRG will be circulating a questionnaire to gauge the community's attitudes on the important questions.

Many issues have been resolved to our satisfaction. But winning battles is not enough by itself to win a war. The wider issue is sensible planning for Blackburn.

CAN THE COMMUNITY DO BETTER THAN IT HAS DONE?

Council and Strategic Planning

Over two and a half years the BVRG has badgered Nunawading Council to listen seriously to the concerns of this community. In the dying months of this Council it has finally agreed (in principle) to our repeated requests to prepare a strategy plan for central Blackburn before the forthcoming Panel hearing on the shopping centre.

There is one fact we make no bones about. It was easier to convince an independent Panel convened by the Minister of Planning and Environment of the broad justice of our cause than it was even to get a hearing at our own local council. The BVRG was systematically excluded from the original working committee which was responsible for planning the shopping centre development, and was regularly voted down on planning issues we brought before Council.

Why the recent change of heart? Under the new Planning and Environment Act, local Councils are now RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES. (Previously, only the Ministry was responsible for significant planning decisions.) 'Responsibility' is a word local councils must now take very seriously: they are responsible in planning matters both to the community and to the Minister. This is all to the good. Council must react more carefully than it has in the past, and must bite bullets that it has traditionally wanted either to duck or (if like Hopalong Cassidy they could catch them in the teeth) to spit out.

Council's decision on a strategy for Blackburn reflects a new realism — greatly influenced by the outgoing Mayor, Jan Plummer. This realism needs to be consolidated.

Council Elections

Do not forget the BVRG was able to demonstrate that 82% of Blackburn people were against the first shopping centre proposal, which the Minister threw out.

Do not forget that Nunawading Council and its officers continually supported that proposal.

Do not forget that many of YOUR OWN ward Councillors endorsed that proposal, despite its overwhelming rejection by residents.

Some Councillors who endorsed the original shopping centre proposal have not stood again.

Community groups like the BVRG want to see a more sensitive and intelligent approach to planning than the last Council generally displayed. Councillors must be held responsible to your community constituency.

For the first time in a Council election, therefore, this Group will publicly support those aspiring councillors who have committed themselves not only to representing the planning interests of this community but to articulating our interests effectively.

Of the candidates presenting themselves in the new North-West Ward, Cr. JOHN SMITH meets these criteria best. Cr. Smith represented the community at the shopping centre panel hearing last year, has made a significant impact on Council in his first term, and, while a good listener to community concerns, has the strength to back his own best judgement.

In the system governing this election, candidates must run on 'tickets'. Cr. Smith's ticket is a community one. JOAN MORGAN, a central Blackburn resident, has a good record of community service, perhaps especially on the Blackburn Lake Management Committee. EVE FESL has a similar record in representing and articulating community interests in North Blackburn. The BVRG believes that, under the preference exchange system governing this election, the community's best interests lie in voting for these three candidates in the order you think most fit.

We have been able to make State government work for us. Let us now do the same in local government.

A FLOOR PLAN OF THE PROPOSED SHOPPING CENTRE

