



## BLACKBURN VILLAGE RESIDENTS GROUP

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#### BABIES AND BATHWATER

However well intentioned, one of the problems with recent planning reforms has been the invalidation of former policies and the protracted process of attempting to restore them within the new framework.

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of Blackburn has been that gardens and trees have not been dominated by the built environment and planning policies and guidelines once helped preserve that feature. Without such safeguards the environment is particularly vulnerable, especially to insensitive development on infill sites. As we wrote to the Chief Commissioner last March "...the distinctive character of an area such as ours can be effectively eroded while waiting for appropriate strategies to be formalised".

Unfortunately, until developments are required to meet conditions supportive of the local environment a lot of well conceived babies will be thrown out with the reformist bathwater.

#### SPECIAL RESIDENTIAL ZONE (SRZ)

On 18 July representatives of local groups, including the BVRG, attended the meeting with Council convened by local MLA Roger Pescott to discuss concerns about the future of the SRZ.

It is hoped that the eventual outcome of that meeting will be the introduction of more appropriate conditions governing development in the Zone.

#### GLEN EBOR AVENUE MULTI-UNIT DEVELOPMENT

As you no doubt know, the Tribunal determined that the appeal against the multi-unit development in that street not be upheld and that a permit be granted. But with the proviso that the plans be modified in terms of set-backs and that new measures for tree protection be applied.

Little as they were, these amendments would not have been proposed or implemented had the Glen Ebor Group of residents not ensured that the case go to a public Hearing.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT PLANNING CHANGES

The BVRG has set up a sub-committee to review the likely impact of planning reforms. We are pleased that it includes representatives of the Blackburn & District Tree Preservation Society and the Blackburn Residents Association.

Consideration of the likely implications for Blackburn of any strategic land use changes and the relevance of any subsequent rezonings, overlays or local variations will alert community groups to critical issues and help to arrange joint action where appropriate.

Our efforts will hopefully have some impact on the quality of Council's public consultation process and we have asked them to give adequate notice of 'planning information' meetings.

**You are urged to attend such meetings when they are arranged.**

## A CAUTIONARY TALE

In November 1994 local business interests and residents attended a meeting with Council to consider the future of the area which had been rezoned especially for the proposed retail complex which failed to eventuate. It was generally agreed that the area should revert to its residential status and road and lane closures be removed. This was exhibited by Whitehorse Council as Amendment L77 in December 94/January 95.

It was no further advanced six months later (conveniently so for the commercial units development in Blackburn Road) or - as our enquiries revealed - sixteen months later. Obviously it now needs modifying because of the commercial development and must be submitted as an Amendment to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme which recently absorbed the Nunawading Scheme.

But don't hold your breath waiting for it to happen.

Above all else it reminds us that whatever services benefited from council amalgamations, town planning certainly wasn't one of them. The ongoing reorganisation and loss of qualified staff has resulted in under resourced departments (Statutory and Strategic being inexplicably split) and a lack of continuity.

And then we read the (hopefully incorrect) claim that where there are less than five objections to a permit application the decision is delegated to the Officers!

## THE BVRG DINNER

Make a diary note now for a relaxed social evening on Friday, 29 November. More details in the next Bulletin.

## COMMITTEE

We have been fortunate to have had three very active and dedicated ~~Chairmen~~ during our short history of nine and one half years, not least Neil Barter who has resigned from the Committee in order to devote more time to his many other interests - with which we wish him well.

While his place has been temporarily filled by Byron Troy we now seek someone to fill the vacancy on the Committee. Don't hesitate to talk it over with present Committee members if you would like to contribute.

## VIC CODE 1

The 1992 Code for Subdivision and Single Dwellings is to be reviewed by an advisory committee whose task is expected to be completed by 30 November. Your Committee is considering whether or not to make a submission and it would be useful if you would let us know of any particular concerns you have with the operation of the present Code.

## OUR THANKS -

to those who answered our call for contributions during this somewhat challenging year.

## URBAN VILLAGE PROJECT

Future funding of this project is presumably one of the many items now under review by governments. However, last year's Case Study Report on the project posed various long term options for a mix of medium density housing, retail, small office and community facilities together with somewhat dramatic suggestions for realignment of Blackburn and other roads near the centre.

What was interesting was that four years after the Hearing when the concept of medium size offices on consolidated sites was so vigorously championed by Council and business interests this Report concludes that development of such offices is "...not likely to happen in the foreseeable future...."

We don't object in principle to substituting smaller and 'home' style offices for the larger type we opposed as inappropriate for Blackburn. However, the challenge as always will be to achieve this without further degrading the character of the area.

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