

SUBMISSION TO PLAN MELBOURNE

I am lodging a submission as I have serious concerns about the future of Melbourne.

Melbourne has been rated one of the world's most liveable cities however our liveability is under serious threat due to rapid population growth and rampant over-development. While, I am not opposed to urban renewal per se, I am opposed to high-rise, high density redevelopment that is insensitive to neighbourhood character. As it stands, many of our inner suburbs are already over-developed and our middle ring suburbs appear to be in the firing line. Rampant over-development is creating traffic congestion, spill-over parking onto neighbouring streets and a loss of amenity.

Increased green-fill redevelopment and outward expansion is not the solution to the problem either when new subdivisions are consuming our prime farming land and market gardens. These precincts must be preserved to ensure that we continue to provide high quality locally grown fruit and vegetables at reasonable prices.

Even our beautiful coastal towns are under threat from over-development. Coastal towns such as Torquay and Ocean Grove need to be preserved for the enjoyment of holiday-makers now and in the future. Furthermore, our delicate coastal ecosystems would be put at risk if over-development of coastal towns close to Melbourne is allowed to continue.

I have read a number of articles claiming that Melbourne's is on a trajectory to double in size and it is anticipated that Melbourne will be home to 8 million people by 2050. This is neither inevitable nor desirable. The biggest driver of rapid growth is immigration with 100,000 migrants choosing to settle in Melbourne each every year adding 50,000 more cars to our roads. Our roads are gridlocked and the government does not have a solution other than to remove a few level crossings to relieve a few choke-points. Nothing short of an underground railway system similar in scope and efficiency to the London underground will solve the problem coupled with a network of roads and tunnels connecting our freeways.

Melbourne does not have inadequate infrastructure to host an increased population and governments have neglected to upgrade our infrastructure over many decades. Infrastructure projects already in the pipeline are piece-meal and the lead-times are too long. People have to cope with traffic gridlock, an inadequate and over-crowded public transport system and greater competition for essential services such as access to hospitals, schools and childcare. In other words, this rapid population growth is not sustainable in either the short-term or the long-term and it is getting worse.

The solution to our planning problems is to reduce immigration to zero-net and redirect all new immigrants to remote regional and rural centres. That would take the pressure off Melbourne and

we could set to work solving our problems without the constant pressure of an increasing population. A reduction in immigration would enable house prices to stabilize and become more affordable and the constant threat to the ambience and liveability of our precious suburbs from overdevelopment would become a thing of the past.

Under the Baillieu/Napthine government, it was recognised that planning was a big issue and our suburbs required greater protection. After a lengthy delay, planning zones that are designed to give homeowners greater certainty and protection were introduced following a process of community consultation. Some areas were designated as growth zones and other areas were designated neighbourhood residential zones. Recently developers have complained that they have been locked out of many zones however the government must not succumb to pressure to change the current arrangements otherwise the community backlash will be severe and planning will become a high priority election issue. The premier needs to speak to his colleagues in Canberra to let them know that Melbourne can no longer absorb the lion's share of the immigration program.

I would be opposed to any changes that reduced the size of our neighbourhood residential zones or weakened the protections that are already in place. Building approvals must be put on-hold until minimum standards are introduced no matter how long that takes. We need to build more dwellings of an adequate size that provide a reasonable quality of life for renters and buyers. That means more villa units and town-houses (two to a block) and fewer multi-story apartments. Apartments of less than 55 square metres in size should be designated studio-apartments and student accommodation and all apartments must have two carparks on title (no stacker carparks).

Councils and local communities have been disempowered by previous government initiatives that have favoured developers and the time has come to transfer power over planning decisions back to council and the communities that they serve. Community objections about congestion, spill-over parking, traffic gridlock, shadowing, loss of amenity and street appeal should be taken much more seriously and further development applications modified accordingly.

I would like to make the following recommendations

- Reduce immigration to zero-net and allow the population of Melbourne to stabilise so that we retain our status as one of the world's most liveable cities
- Compel new migrants and refugees to settle in remote regional and rural areas under a policy of decentralisation
- Introduce minimum standards governing the size, quality and amenity of all new dwellings with a corresponding increase in semi-detached or free-standing townhouses and single story villa units as opposed to multi-story apartment towers.
- Transfer power over planning decisions back to council and the community that it serves by removing VCAT and replacing it with a democratically elected community jury consisting of local residents who would be given the power to modify or reject all disputed planning applications with a special focus on compliance with neighbourhood character quality of building, adequacy of accommodation, preservation of trees and greenery, adequacy of car-parking spaces for residents visitors and tradesmen, elimination of shadowing, shading and

greater consideration to be given to objections raised by neighbours. At the same time the ambiance, liveability and amenity must be preserved. This will ensure that our suburbs remain clean, green, safe and attractive and we build stronger and more cohesive communities.

- Preserve and protect our farmland, market gardens and coastal areas by restraining outward expansion and reducing new green-fill developments. This could be achieved easily within the parameters of slower-growth facilitated by zero-net immigration.
- Invest in infrastructure for a modern city with particular emphasis on expanding our underground railway network and installing circle lines such as an inner circle, middle circle and outer circle line connecting stations. This project will take many decades and cost tens of billions of dollars however without excessive immigration we will have the luxury of more time.
- Restrict foreign investment in established real estate by removing the rules whereby overseas buyers are allowed to buy established houses in good condition. knock them down and rebuild.
- Preserve and protect heritage listed buildings
- Stop foreign investment in new real estate that is not compliant with minimum standards and penalise investors who intentionally leave properties vacant.
- Abolish political donations from developers.