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18 December 2015

BY EMAIL TO:
The Honourable Richard Wynne
Minister for Planning
ORIGINAL SENT BY POST

Dear Minister,

We are aware of Plan Melbourne Refresh and its intent significantly to increase the density of development in Melbourne. Already our green and leafy middle suburbs are being destroyed by a proliferation of intrusive and inappropriate development. The reputation that Melbourne has had as being one of the world's most liveable cities is being rapidly destroyed, as are many homes.

Plan Melbourne Refresh is simply, it appears, a means to encourage even greater destruction of what is the fundamental character of Melbourne's older, pleasant, established suburbs. The document shows that the clear intention is to rezone considerably more of these, to allow more intensive development, such that they will be subjected to more and more box-like overdevelopments, inserted wherever possible. This may include larger blocks of units scattered willy-nilly wherever a developer can buy a block; or two or more buildings on very small blocks, squashed between individual properties, dominating and overlooking neighbours, to the detriment of their privacy and way of life.

Even worse, such a strategy is being implemented by stealth, as new planning laws and "plans" are designed to make it easier and easier for inappropriate development to proceed, in contravention of existing residents' rights and indeed their entire way of life.

The promotion by the State government of even more insensitive and unwarranted development is not a rational way to protect voters' interests or to win their future votes. While the policy seems to be growth at all costs, the reality is that the present population needs first to be considered and indeed protected. Furthermore, rampant growth without first providing sufficient, appropriate infrastructure, including such basics as sewerage and so on, cannot be sustained.

Responsible planning for the future is sensible but just legalising inappropriate development at the expense of the existing residents and to the detriment of the whole city is just plain irresponsible and indeed underhanded.

As to Melbourne's heritage and history, it is clear that despite the warm words that often accompany such topics, the reality is that heritage and history are not valued. This is yet another example where development is simply allowed to over-ride all other aspects, to the detriment of residents, now and in the future.

Local Councils, whose role is to represent and support their ratepayers, who provide the funds for the Councils' operations and ongoing existence, are being pressured more and more to trash ratepayers' interests and accommodate developers. This is totally unacceptable.

Here are two appalling and current examples:

Firstly, our home of 35 years at removed is a substantial, 140 year old Victorian property, with a remarkable history and considerable architectural and cultural merit. It is the oldest two-storey house in a wide area, a decade or so older than the well-known Villa Alba. Yet just days ago Boroondara Council voted to allow a developer to build two narrow dwellings, contrary to local

planning policy, on the block beside us at removed. It is proposed the one nearer us will be built on our boundary, 5 feet from our house, in dark brown rendered polystyrene, with a party wall on its other side joined to a second similar dwelling. The inappropriateness of this development is hard to imagine. It will severely reduce our amenity and the setting of our historic property – our way of life will be compromised and the overlooking will be extraordinarily severe. The proposal is contrary to the neighbourhood character and detached streetscape nature of the area and virtually ignores the Council's policies and guidelines. To quote our local ward Councillor, it takes too much!

Yet it appears, via Plan Melbourne Refresh you wish to encourage and increase such greedy and predatory behaviour on the part of developers.

Secondly, a "battle" is underway to save not just public land but a public street, not far from us at the removed. A developer is proposing to build (yet another) 11-storey development beside the Yarra River at removed. However, the developer also is seeking to take over an existing street, so as to provide in and out tunnels beside the development to access its underground parking. This street provides one of the few access points to the river and also to a pedestrian bridge over the river removed.

Were this to be allowed such a precedent would be extraordinary and should not even be a consideration at all - has planning come to such a low point as this already. Is this the sort of outcome that Plan Melbourne Refresh supports?

We feel very threatened.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

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