

SOS Planning Update – August 2014

Dear Member,

There are several important events coming up that address the democratic planning and liveability of Melbourne. Please let your friends know about these coming events:

*** "Power to the People – reclaiming control of electricity in Victoria" - Wednesday, Sept 3, 6.30-9pm Brunswick Town Hall**

(see flyer attached)

Energy bills out of control.

Power companies standing in the way of renewable energy.

State and Federal Governments doing nothing to lead the climate change or energy debate.

It's time for communities to demand reform of the energy sector and governments to take action.....

This is a public forum to learn about how consumers of electricity can reclaim control over their power bills, and more particularly, how the power companies are getting away with massive bill hikes every year. Expert speakers will outline how the current National Energy Rules are exploited for huge power company profits with little protection for the consumer. The myths around renewable energy solutions will be debunked, and the links between electricity supply/demand and climate change explored.

*** The Great Population Debate - between Kelvin Thomson (MP for Wills) & Robert Doyle (Mayor of Melbourne), Mon. 13 Oct. at 5.30 – 7pm, Deakin Edge.**

NEWS:

(1) Implementation of the new Residential Zones – some observations

On July 1, those councils still waiting for their choice of zone allocation to be approved were subjected to a “neutral conversion” – the General Residential Zone was imposed across all of their existing residential zone areas. This involved two dozen councils, including some which had applied as early as late last year for their new zoning amendments to be approved.

SOS has heard that some of these 24 councils have since been experiencing a sudden surge in development applications in residential areas that may later come under the more restrictive Neighbourhood RZ once zoning amendments have been approved by the Minister. Strange that draft amendments lodged early by some councils for consideration by the Residential Zones Standing Advisory Committee still hadn't been approved by July.....

As to the content of the new zones, giving councils a bit more power to vary local controls for better neighborhood protection was appropriate but for these controls to be effective, councils should have been required to specify not only mandatory heights but minimum lot size and the maximum number of dwellings per lot. Specifying both is necessary to maintain reasonable local dwelling density and protect green open space. Some councils have specified subdivisions into multiple lots with a minimum lot size of 250-400 sqm, so an existing 1000 sqm suburban block could be subdivided into 3 or 4 lots.

* For background, see:

[www.actpla.act.gov.au/ data/assets/pdf file/0015/13704/Tony Hall - Death of the Australian Backyard paper.pdf](http://www.actpla.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/13704/Tony_Hall_-_Death_of_the_Australian_Backyard_paper.pdf)

Since Rescode is a state planning provision which even VCAT agrees should not be treated as a “one size fits all” code, Rescode variations to suit different areas are appropriate and councils should have also been required to

include extra locally-appropriate variations in the new zone schedules. These should also have been mandatory - instead, most councils have failed to include any extra variations but even where they have, as discretionary guidelines these just amount to more scope for argument at VCAT and provide only an illusion of protection.

* For help in arguing on Rescode and neighbourhood character in your VCAT submission, see: <http://www.sos.asn.au/category/help-arguing-rescode-amenity-standards-vcat>

* For an detailed expose of the implications of the New Zones, see: <http://www.sterow.com/?p=4099>

(2) Key performance indicators omitted from Plan Melbourne

The pro-development focus and lack of transparency & accountability of the final version of Plan Melbourne (May 2014) shouldn't be under-estimated.

Under Direction 7.5: "Monitor Progress and Outcomes", a number of important performance indicators previously included in the draft version have been left out of the final document. These were all vital parameters in measuring how well Plan Melbourne might achieve its goals. These missing Performance Measures include:

- **proximity to public transport,**
- **travel time variability and delay,**
- **air quality,**
- **protection of landfill distances,**
- **community participation.**

Under Direction 7.1 "Drive delivery and facilitate action", further reforms target the State Planning Policy Framework, municipal strategic statements and even overlays and particular provisions. As Direction 7.1 concludes, "Central to these further reforms will be the development of a change program **shifting the focus of planners from a regulatory mindset under the current system to a facilitative mindset that encourages development** consistent with the directions of Plan Melbourne and Regional Growth Plans".

In other words, pretty much an overhaul of the entire planning regime, all without any participatory community consultation or independent public debate.

A detailed comparison of the final Plan Melbourne strategy with the draft version will be available shortly on the upgraded SOS website: <http://sos.asn.au>

As to the increasing concern about the state's population growth, recent surveys show that the majority of people don't want continuing population increase - it exacerbates the shortfall in infrastructure and worsens individual standards of living (as pointed out by the Kohler Report on the ABC in March).

With increasing political pressure to reduce skilled migration rates to help reduce unemployment (especially youth unemployment) and growing international pressure to act on greenhouse emissions, a high population growth rate of 2%pa is very unlikely to continue for the next 20

years or more. Yet this continual growth spiral is the driving assumption that Plan Melbourne is built on.

* For background on the economic effects of lax administration of high immigration levels, see: <http://www.theage.com.au/comment/lax-immigration-policy-hurting-australian-job-seekers-20140807-1019tr.html>

(3) SOS support for council legal challenge to EWL planning approval

In mid-July, SOS sent this urgent letter to Moonee Valley and Yarra City Councillors:

"Save our Suburbs Inc. strongly opposes the East West Link proposal because of its potential damage to the fabric of inner city life, and because building more freeways attracts more traffic and soon creates more congestion than before. This is confirmed by Melbourne's own experience with the Monash Freeway, the Westgate Bridge, etc.

But building rail links in parallel with freeways attracts commuters back to rail, lowers rail costs/head and frees up arterial roads for those who need to use them - trucks, commercial vehicles and multi-destination vehicles. This is explained scientifically by the long-established Downs-Thompson Paradox see:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downs-Thomson_paradox

SOS is a city-wide community-based group dedicated to the maintenance and improvement of urban residential amenity in its widest interpretation. That includes improving the quality, extent and frequency of public transport and minimising traffic congestion with its resultant economic, social and health impacts, including particulate air pollution which kills hundreds each year in Melbourne. Our stance does NOT include more freeways.

Moreland City councillors are holding a special meeting tonight to consider a legal challenge to planning approval for the East West Link. We urge you to contact them and lend your support. We also encourage you to join this legal challenge".

Yarra Council chose to support Moreland's legal challenge to the validity of the EW Link process. For more detail, see:

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/legal-challenges-to-the-east-west-link--potent-threat-or-a-political-posture-20140809-101us1.html>

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