

**Submission
No 75**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROTECTIONS WITHIN THE VICTORIAN
PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

Organisation: Dingley Village Community Association

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Inquiry into Protections within the Victorian Planning Framework

SUBMISSION

The Dingley Village Community Association (DVCA) strongly supports the *Inquiry into Protections within the Victorian Planning Framework*, as moved by the Legislative Council on 28 October 2020.

Of particular concern to the Dingley Village community are items

(2) *environmental sustainability and vegetation protection*,

(3) *delivering certainty and fairness in planning decisions for communities* (all parts a-e), and,

(5) *ensuring residential zones are delivering the type of housing that communities want*.

On behalf of the residents of Dingley Village, the DVCA submits that,

Since the creation of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, the population of Metropolitan Melbourne has increased from 3 million to over 5 million and is projected to overtake Sydney as the most populous city in Australia in the near future. Whilst this growth brings economic benefits, it clearly does so at significant cost to the natural environment and smaller, suburban communities.

In the 35 years since the creation of the Act, Victorians have become increasingly aware of, and negatively affected by, the impacts of urban sprawl on the Victorian and global climate as well as on physical and mental health.

Despite these clear, urgent concerns, Victorians have seen developers use tactics such as

Before development applications:

- Removing trees deliberately and illegally, and simply absorbing fines they see as insignificant
- Applying to remove multiple trees individually (e.g. via abusing the Vic Smart system) to bypass Council process and create a more difficult objection process for residents

During the application process:

- Claiming market research and advertising as “community consultation”
- Ignoring feedback from communities and councils following initial rejection based on local policy
- Then appealing to VCAT or Standing Advisory Committees with identical plans or ambit claims

And taking advantage of:

- Committees comprised of no community or environmental representatives
- Vague wording in guidelines such as “net benefit” and “neighbourhood character”

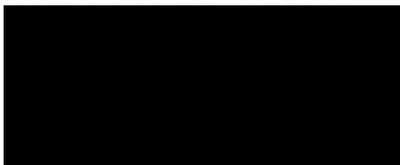
By way of local example, the Dingley Village community has been resisting the overdevelopment of the Former Kingswood Golf Course site by AustralianSuper since 2014. The developer's plan sought and utilised no meaningful community input, called for 823 multi-storey dwellings at a density completely out of character with the surrounding neighbourhood, and offered no infrastructure to sustain an increase of over 20% of the suburb's population.

In 2018, this plan was rejected by the community (98% of over 8,000 objections) and then unanimously by Kingston Council.

Despite this, AustralianSuper has made no significant changes other than to bypass the community and Council. In November 2020, the developer submitted an almost identical plan (in fact, with higher density) to the Golf Course Standing Advisory Committee. It does not satisfy the Guidelines of that Committee, including the complete avoidance of Step 1 which requires an offer for the land to be acquired by Government. We await the final result in early 2022.

This is only one of many threats in recent years to the Chain of Parks, Green Wedge and other spaces that are not only crucial to life and wellbeing in Melbourne, but also form key commitments made by the Victorian Government.

Given the changes to Melbourne's natural and social environments since the creation of the Planning and Environment Act 1987, we believe it is highly appropriate to revisit the Act, and strengthen it to better defend Victorian people and spaces against inappropriate overdevelopment.



Leigh Gridley

President, on behalf of the Dingley Village Community Association

Friday 28 January 2022