

Point 1: That Australian Heritage be given greater independence in the assessment of planning applications, and that it is not dictated to just by what the 'experts' value as heritage, but what is also appreciated as heritage by those that actually buy in and live in an area. At present in some municipalities (eg Stonnington Council), a building is deemed to be of heritage value only if the building is 'perfectly intact' for its era, with no additions or amendments to the building. Taking the UK as an example, a building can still be 'of worth' even though its history may span a number of centuries, including changes to the building that various owners have made!

Our Australian architecture is unique, valued and valuable. It is ours; it provides us with a sense of place and of history. It tells the story of a particular area. Our heritage protection in Australia is quite ineffective compared to that of many other countries; as someone who lived in the UK for a decade and worked for a London borough I know this to be a fact.

Within local government there should be full-time heritage advisers and advocates who would work solely on the heritage protection of its particular municipality accompanied by greater transparency and scrutiny. Councils should have Heritage Services separate from the Planning Division, and its role should be to promote the local heritage to the community and to the relevant real estate agents.

Additionally, local residents should have a genuine voice about what is allowed to be built and what should be retained in their area; after all they are the people that pay the rates.

Point 2: That a demolition permit not be issued without a planning permit. Demolitions should not occur until the planning process has decided what is to replace it. This duty should be returned to local councils and no longer carried out by private building surveyors, who are not accountable to local residents of the municipality.

The Federal Government Foreign Investment Review Board Rules contain a ridiculous incentive for foreign nationals (who have absolutely no interest in our built heritage), to demolish existing homes. The frequent outcome has been that foreign nationals buy up quality homes, obtain a permit to demolish through a private Building Surveyor, clear the block of all vegetation and canopy trees, then build a huge McMansion, which takes up the whole block. It is not suited to Australian climatic conditions, and the landscaping of the garden with fake grass, succulents, and other small non-native plants are not conducive to a healthy environment. It has also unfortunately resulted in the loss of irreplaceable heritage homes, as well as tree canopy cover, permeable land and open space.

Point 3: The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) should be completely overhauled and vastly improved as the wider population has no confidence or faith in its competence or impartiality. This perception, based on case outcomes, is seen to be a place where the rich and powerful (mainly developers), go to get permission to ride roughshod over residents' and councils' wishes and protections and get whatever they want. Resident rights have been progressively and thoroughly curtailed by the

introduction of rules such as "VicSmart" and the "Good Design Guide". So much so that we now feel that we are the voiceless and disempowered. Residents are entitled to a say in the character of their street, their neighbourhood, their community! After all, we have to live there. Developers typically don't live in the area that they trash.

Point 4: That moonscaping/landclearing of blocks be completely banned, as this adds to extreme loss of vegetation, impact on climate change and severe erosion.

The 'greenest' buildings are in fact the ones we already have! Those with shading, wide verandahs, high ceilings etc. When you take into account the cement, iron, and other building materials needed for a new building, it is much more energy efficient to fix up an old one than start from scratch. And allowing the demolition of old trees and gardens leads to an increase in hard surfaces and the urban heat island effect. The amount of carbon emitted during the construction of new buildings, due to the creation of steel, cement and bricks for them, vastly outweighed the energy savings the newer building provided. Not surprisingly most new builds (especially Melborigian McMansions), have at least 4 – 6 large air conditioners sitting outside.

Point 5: That creating medium and high density buildings is not the only answer to increased population; ie that metropolitan Melbourne look to decentralisation options rather than cramming even more people into an already overcrowded city, which is already groaning with traffic and congestion.

For medium density zoned areas in particular, encouragement should be given to keeping the existing home, especially if it has heritage value, and have one other dwelling at the back so that some or most of the mature front and back garden can be retained. For new builds, terraced homes or semi-detached homes (which include native gardens), should be the buildings of choice.

Point 6: That political donations by property developers be banned. Too often I and other citizens of Melbourne feel completely disempowered as we see time and again that we do not have a genuine say in planning matters. We see evidence time and again that property developers have all the rights, by using campaign donations to the major political parties. Because of the unequal power and lack of lobbying potential or practice, residents do not get a genuine, sympathetic hearing from MP's or indeed at times, from some Councillors. Despite residents faithfully and diligently paying their taxes and rates, it means absolutely nothing when it comes to having a say about what gets built or retained in the local area or in the wider community. In fact we have no genuine say at all. It is all lip-service!

Point 7: The Property Council, The Master Builders association and the Real Estate Institute and Agents should have much less sway over 'what stays and what goes' when it comes to our built and natural environment.

Too often these voices drown out everyone else's. Why is that? What right do they have to dictate to governments and ordinary citizens as to how our local environment looks? We live in a time of climate change; indeed it is a climate emergency. All the above mentioned are only interested in money; not the greater good of the community.

Point 8: If anybody destroys or desecrates a Heritage Listed Building there should be a law in place to mandate that they rebuild the building EXACTLY the way it was, and be fined with a very heavy penalty or spend a lengthy period in gaol. (Any associated vegetation lost through the demolition process would need to be replaced with very mature trees and shrubs). No need to go into detail, but the example for rebuilding would be The Corkman Hotel.

Point 9: That State Government and Councils need to commit to increased tree canopy cover across both public and private land within their jurisdiction, and provide annual reports on their progress. Removing tree canopy cover leads to the creation of urban heat islands. Cities like Melbourne are now 4-10 degrees hotter than non-urban areas. This level of additional heat is bad for our health; and decimates the local wildlife.