

## **Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry – Planning and heritage 28 February 2022**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to this Parliamentary enquiry on the adequacy of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the Victorian planning framework in relation to planning and heritage protection.

Firstly, Mount Alexander Shire Council officers would like to emphasise that any future changes to the Act or the framework should be seek to empower and invest in local councils through a facilitative approach, rather than instructive. This will enable the consideration of more place-based and localised solutions to development issues.

The following points would like to be raised by officers at Mount Alexander Shire:

### **Housing**

- Diversity of housing is difficult to achieve under the current planning framework

Diversity of lots can be achieved well through subdivisions, but this doesn't flow through to the final built form to achieve diverse housing styles (unless applying different controls over different lots). There needs to be more incentives for developers to encourage, and for and purchasers of land to construct diverse housing (that is well designed). E.g. Darebin City Council has prepared a checklist for good design, affordable housing.

- Greater incentives for affordable housing development

This could be achieved by inclusionary zoning.

- Social housing levy should be introduced

It is disappointing that this has been removed and will no longer be pursued under the current government.

- Secondary dwelling code should be introduced

The findings and recommendations from the Secondary Dwelling trial should be used to inform the creation of a Secondary Dwelling Victorian Planning Provision to be applied across all planning schemes.

- Investigation into the impact of Air BnBs on affordable housing

There should be more investigation by the State Government into the impact of AirBnBs on affordable housing. This would include looking at best practice models for short term stay accommodation (owner occupier (commercial enterprise) vs. vacancy (gender equity issue)) and lead to recommendations for policy.

### **Environmental sustainability and vegetation protection**

- ESD standards should be introduced

Mount Alexander Shire Council is part of the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) and is participating in the Elevating ESD Targets project with 30 other Victorian councils to introduce elevated ESD targets in our schemes. This should be supported by the state government.

State provisions for ESD should be a floor rather than a ceiling (each council is different and therefore should be able to adapt to local settings).

- Greater requirements for large subdivisions to protect vegetation and the natural topography (to reduce the need for earthworks, cut and fill, etc.)

## Heritage

- State of Heritage Review: Local Heritage 2020 (Heritage Council Victoria)

Council supports the recommendations of this review, most importantly the need for more direct support and assistance for heritage studies.

- Councils should continue to play a big part in heritage protection but require additional resources in order to do so

As a small rural council, we don't have sufficient funding or in-house resources available to prepare or update heritage studies. This means that while state legislation and guidance has changed in regards to best practice, we struggle to keep up. As a result, there can be perceived or real challenges and costs to residents where a Heritage Overlay is applied to their property. For example, they may be required as part of the permit application process to undertake heritage reports (i.e. heritage impact statements) in instances where there is a lack of heritage information (due to the absence or quality of a heritage study) for that property to assist in application decision making.

The planning scheme amendment process is also onerous (time and costly) in order to apply, remove or alter Heritage Overlay mapping or schedule information.

- The focus on heritage should be redirected/incorporate more about to achieve good design

Good design has been included in NSW planning legislation. This incorporates heritage, sustainability, neighbourhood character, etc.

- Design review panels should be made available to councils

These could be set up at a state or even better, regional level (there are examples in NSW, and more recently, City of Ballarat in Victoria).


- Demolition by neglect should be included in the VPPs

Work has been commissioned by the National Trust on demolition by neglect, which recommends this policy be included in VPPs. See

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/initiatives/demolition-by-neglect/>

- Making contact to and obtaining advice from Heritage Victoria/ Heritage advice from DELWP should be easier

Refer to the State of Heritage Review findings and recommendations.

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