



# Darebin Appropriate Development Association: Protect Your Community

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DADA is glad for the opportunity to provide a submission, indeed we feel compelled to make some points regarding the "Reforming the Victorian Planning Provisions Discussion Paper" on behalf of the voters we represent.

In Darebin, the community has experienced a tsunami of development, most of which is medium and high density that is not representing a full range of diverse housing. Darebin Council conceded in 2014 that there were more than enough development proposals on the books to meet needs until 2020. Still State Government applies pressure through any means possible to over-develop our city. We dispute the projected population figures and the need to overdevelop to meet this suspect projected need. DADA believes this is the state government propping up the building industry for the short term provision of jobs and the increased funds to the state government coffers at the expense of the dramatically reduced liveability and amenity across our city.

Of great concern to us is what is happening in the middle ring suburbs like Preston and Reservoir in regard to urban renewal where over time, suburbs have fewer large canopy trees in both the private and public realm, the low standards of ESD, poor internal and external design and quality of new development and the cumulative effect on whole streets, we believe is alarming. If we carry on "business as usual", large parts of Preston and Reservoir are destined to become impoverished ghettos.

DADA's view is that Darebin Council; indeed most Councils, need a requirement to conduct a bi-annual physical audit and appraisal of the cumulative impact and quality of new development, in order that all parties, including developers, are striving to improve our suburbs and better meet the needs of our community. The audit must include the number of bedrooms in each dwelling and the numbers of vacant dwellings.

There should be a mechanism in the planning scheme to ensure vacant buildings are available for long term rental and to allow councils to quota the housing type by numbers of bedrooms. Launch Housing says that since 2001 there has been a 22% increase in homeless children under 12 years of age. In Darebin this is due to the removal of older separate housing stock to shoehorn infill development. The older separate housing stock has historically provided cheaper rental, cheaper homes for first home buyers and better family accommodation.

Market driven development is money driven development. It has failed to deliver appropriate housing, excluding those in the community who do not have sufficient funds. Further, for all its hype, we have not seen the market deliver affordable housing. While it is reasonable for developers to make a profit, we do not think that the over-inflated margins are reasonable in the current climate of rising homelessness and lack of affordability for first home buyers.

This issue is further amplified by the disparity of new development between what is built in the southern half and in the northern half of Darebin. What can be observed is that Darebin's LPP has been interpreted differently depending on where you live.

We question whether proposed changes to the current Planning Provisions will further make our suburbs less liveable that translates to these suburbs less loveable. Darebin's LPP no doubt reads as if it was similar to any other Council LPP in Victoria, yet clearly it is the way it is interpreted. Any Clause is open to interpretation to some extent, so we say that fast tracking is unnecessary unless there are more mandatory and fewer discretionary statements.

We wonder why there hasn't been more time and effort devoted to consulting with the community or at least requiring Council's to meet with community representatives in order to develop and produce more considered and creative responses to reform, which may be mutually beneficial.

We remain curious that both State and Local government integrate work, transport and housing, yet Darebin is rezoning much of what was industrial land to residential, so young locals who may want to continue to reside in Darebin cannot find work locally due to the decreasing amount of land dedicated to industrial and manufacturing, so a car is essential for these workers to travel from Darebin across to an outer suburb.

DADA is of the view that the community needs certainty and assurance that any proposed reforms will work to the benefit of the community and are not further skewed to simply accelerate an already developer driven, market based process that will effectively further lock out third party objectors and continue to fail to meet the needs of large sections of our community.

We feel what would be useful and helpful to all stake holders, would be to produce a local government planning document with a similar format and layout to the recently developed Urban Design Framework which contained images and illustrations as examples to support the text. This made the intent and description very clear and less open to interpretation.

To hasten the process, it would be better to develop a very detailed, clearly defined and comprehensive tick list, that a proposed development must comply with and if the development fails on just one, must be refused. Developers should be entitled to a limited number of consultations maybe 3 with planning delegates, and will be charged each subsequent meeting.

We need stronger not weaker planning controls at the level of local government that are more community driven and not left to the market. We need to empower local government and communities by ensuring that projects other than minor modifications to existing properties are scrutinized by council in consultation with the community. It will not be more time consuming or cumbersome if the responsible authorities reject outright proposals that do not meet any single standard and it will be well worth the effort if we can avoid a planning disaster while at the same time achieving better planning outcomes.

To achieve a good result, we need to give Councils the right to veto or modify a proposed development application and in the case of a disputed application that cannot be resolved at the level of local government, we recommend replacing VCAT with a **democratically elected community jury** with the power to veto or modify a project.

In conclusion, DADA does not want to see **Vic Smart** or **Code Assess** broadened. The fast tracking for so-called 'simple' planning applications has seen very poor outcomes in Darebin and it is outrageous that government seeks to further reduce ratepayers and resident's rights to have a say about how community is built in the future through the third party objection process.

DADA wants a community led process, not market driven, to ensure protection for older housing stock and more planning provisions to direct future planning that better meets our needs, not the needs of developers.

We view the attempt by the State government to streamline the management of the development process by removing resident's rights as a cynical attempt to prop up their major capital and political income streams at the cost of poor outcomes to the community and voters.

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