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## **Community Infrastructure for Carlton**

### **1 Historical Background**

The State Government had planned for some years to demolish outdated 4 storey walk-up units on the Public Housing Estates in Carlton, and replace them with modern apartments. It also proposed the sell-off of land on the Public Housing Estates for a major private housing development on three sites. CRA maintained the Government approved private housing development is a misuse of public land and a gross overdevelopment of the Housing Estates. As part of the redevelopment, the Government was to hand over approx 3.5 ha over three sites, plus \$70 million, as an incentive to a private developer, who would construct 550 private units and 245 public units.

There is no component of “affordable housing” in the entire redevelopment.

CRA welcomed the redevelopment of the three subject sites and the stated objectives of Amendment C117. However we were deeply dismayed by the developer driven proposal, which takes no cognisance of the social, physical and psychological consequences for the tenants of the Estates. Grave concerns were expressed regarding the process, and lack of transparency given issues discussed below

CRA policy on Community Infrastructure is detailed in ‘CRA Vision for Carlton’ attached.

### **2 Issues of Concern**

CRA, like other stakeholders, was led to believe that it would be included in a process of community consultation, which would lead to the preparation of a development plan for public display. This did not happen. Instead a development plan appeared which had as its objective, maximum site coverage/ yield. Clearly, private development concerns have prevailed over public interests, as detailed below:

- Gross over-development of the three sites aimed at maximising the private housing component. No ‘affordable’ housing is planned; the Queen Elizabeth site will be fully privatised.
- Massive loss of public open space (approx 3.5 ha). This despite pre-election assurance from Minister Pike that *“there will be no net loss of public open space”*.
- Transfer of valuable public land for private development. Justified by the State Government, on grounds that this would create a so-called ‘*salt and pepper*’ social mix of public tenants and owners, and thereby integrate tenants into the Carlton community. Such social mix, it was claimed, would remove the stigma of living on the estates. In theory a public/private mix is desirable. CRA queried what percentage of people currently housed on the two estates will benefit? 5%? 10%? How would the remaining circa 4,500 residents benefit? Minister Pike made unsubstantiated claims, that Housing Estate developments will benefit **all** Carlton.
- The \$70 million government contribution could have funded the entire Public Housing redevelopment. There was no need to hand over invaluable public housing land as a developer incentive.
- There is no upgrading of the tower blocks and surrounds.
- The number of public tenants that can be accommodated in the redevelopment is not increased, despite a crisis in housing availability (waiting list of 40,000).

- The community garden in its new location will be near the southern boundary and in the shadow of ‘nominally’ 8-storey buildings.
- Only 700 sq.m. will be provided for community services and support agencies. The wider Carlton community will be excluded (ref 3.5 below; the Office of Housing made abundantly clear it has no role in hosting infrastructure for the whole Carlton community on the Estates).
- Inadequate provision for car parking.

### 3 Melbourne Planning Scheme Amendment C117

A **Planning Panel** was convened in November-December 2006 to consider Planning Amendment C117 (rezoning the Estates from Res Code 1 to Res Code 2), excluding consideration of the Development Plan which had been exhibited with C117.

At the opening of the Panel Hearing, barristers representing the **Ministers for Planning and Housing** sought to exclude consideration of all issues other than the C117 rezoning proposal. The Panel recognised its very constrained Term of Reference, however argued there were well-founded community expectations which had arisen from both written and verbal commitments from the Minister for Housing, other Government members and bureaucrats, that Development Plans should also be considered. Housing Minister Broad had earlier agreed in letters to CRA and others that all matters associated with the redevelopment were on the table at the Planning Panel, including the Development Plan. The Panel recognised widespread community disquiet over many issues and included comment on them in the Panel Report.

**Developer Lendlease** presented an excellent submission arguing for community development, which required development and integration of the entire estates with the broader community.

**City of Melbourne** submission gained little purchase. A major issue was that the plan did not integrate existing tower blocks into the development. Minister for Planning: *“At the present time there are no plans for other redevelopment of the high-rise towers . . . there would be no net community benefit”*.

The Government adopted Amendment C117 in March 2007 and ignored most issues associated with its Development Plan, raised at the Panel Hearing. However, it agreed to maintain (rather than reduce) the existing level of housing accommodation and to provide a more realistic mix of apartment sizes (1, 2, 3 and 4 BR). The sell-off of public housing land for upmarket private housing was confirmed. Arguments from the Carlton community that parkland and open space provision on the Estates was well below Melbourne City Council recommendations (1ha per 1000 residents) and that public land should be applied to “affordable housing”, held no sway with the Government.

#### 3.1 Integration (Private/Public mix)

Integration will not occur. Public units will be separated from private, in separate housing blocks, possibly fenced off. Reason: advice sought from developer Becton supported the view that public/private must be separated; it is not an attractive proposition for private owners to live on a public housing estate. A private-public mix of 70-30% was argued desirable for commercial success of the project.

#### 3.2 Open Space

There would be ‘considerable’ loss of public open space, however remaining space is claimed to be ‘quality open space’. Such space adjacent to private apartments will be restricted for use by private owners and their tenants.

#### 3.3 Community Liaison Committee

Chaired by Jenny Mikakos MP and attended by DHS Project Director Garry Byass, on his retirement by Barbara Oleczek, and numbers of DHS staff, Public Housing tenants and representatives from e.g. CLAN, CRA, CPS. Meetings consist of DHS presenting plans.

Objections raised by CRA and others were glossed over: e.g. demolition of ‘walk up’ housing prior to 2006 elections, necessitating dispersal of public tenants years before building construction, claimed necessary because of maintenance costs.

Discussions included:

Plans ensure that apartments are commercially attractive to private owners. The OoH will aim to avoid the Kensington experience (units were bought by investors, and leased to private tenants). Lanes destroyed forty years ago will be reinstated, for a ‘Carlton look’! The developer will then line the lanes densely with 6-8 storey apartment buildings. Drummond St or a lane address will be attractive to private owners. Housing will be predominantly private, isolated from the towers (by the ‘green vista’, and a bicycle lane) and ‘gated’ from a smaller number of separated public housing buildings.

### 3.4 Infrastructure Responsibility

The CoM took prime responsibility for providing infrastructure and services to the Estates and established two consultative committees: the **Infrastructure Plan for Carlton (IPC)** and **Opportunities for Carlton (OfC)**. Both are linked to the OoH project, and include representatives from DPCD, DHS and further Government departments, and cross community groups including representatives from CLAN, CRA, CAN and other Carlton organizations. Infrastructure will be provided on limited space adjacent to the Lygon/Rathdowne St Estate.

The CoM and State Govt claim that IPC and OfC will provide infrastructure for **all** Carlton. Indeed, a range of organisations and businesses have been surveyed, however consultations focus solely on addressing endemic disadvantage of Carlton’s public housing tenants (comprising 18% of residents) through provision of essential services on the Estates. The Rev Peter Hollingsworth principle is applied – to house all the poor and disadvantaged together, to simplify service delivery. This policy entrenches the “welfare” model of service delivery.

### 3.5 Community Space

A floor area of 700 sq m will be made available for community infrastructure on the Estates. However **the Office of Housing made it abundantly clear it has no mandate to host infrastructure for the whole Carlton community:**

*“... any land retained within the ownership of the Director of Housing can only be used to host community infrastructure where that infrastructure is for the provision of community services and amenities ancillary to public housing. Such community infrastructure is distinct from community facilities which are primarily for the benefit of the wider Carlton community. More precisely, there appears to be a potential legal impediment to placing community facilities which service the whole of Carlton on the land being the subject of the Amendment.”* (Barrister for the Director of Housing : Amendment C117 to the Melbourne Planning Scheme Item 21 p.6).

**Minister Pike confirmed there has never been any intention to provide space for and to bring CNLC, Yarra Health et al onto the Estates.**

Carlton Residents are restricted from use of open space, even on CoM property (Neill St Reserve). When told a resident had taken her children to play on the playground equipment on the Lygon St estate, Garry Byass, former Project Director, Carlton Housing Development reacted angrily, and threatened to have the area fenced off from the Carlton community. He then wrote to CRA (24 August 06) ***“The existing space which is not public open space, it is for the use of the residents on the estate, is poorly defined and does not create a sense of safety and security.”*** As the playground in question is on CoM property (Neill St Reserve) CRA queried the order with IPC, OoH, CoM and State Govt ministers. No response was ever received, so presumably the statement holds, i.e. non-estate residents are not welcome on the estates.

**A broader vision is needed**, as described in the attached document (CRA Vision for Carlton). Tenants are housed on the Estates, but do not wish to spend their entire lives there. They are

excluded by financial constraints from much Carlton has to offer. Even a social worker on the Estates recently stated he was unaware of the facilities offered by the Melbourne Museum and The University of Melbourne. Opportunities are needed for the tenants to participate in the wider community, to create awareness, break down barriers and assist integration. To be inspired by others from that community, to be exposed to ideas, concepts, a vision, choices, employment, empowerment, and participation in full community life. The tenants deserve opportunities to participate in fulfilling their lives together with the entire Carlton Community.

### 3.5 Community Services and Infrastructure

In discussion with CoM Community Development management, CRA emphasized the long list of equally dire but different and complementary needs of the entire Carlton community for facilities and services (listed on p.3, *Vision for Carlton*). Carlton has no town hall, no library, no space to *be* community. Although admitting to this need, IfC and OfC management claim all Carlton can share infrastructure and services, even though these are aimed specifically at Public Housing tenants. It is claimed that this would break down social barriers.

This 'sharing' will not eventuate, because:

- The Estate is not centrally located.
- IfC and OfC will address only perceived needs specific to Public Housing Tenants, general community needs will not be addressed.
- Only occasional, shared meeting space is offered to the Carlton community. There will not be space for a range of facilities required by the whole community, including Public Housing tenants.

Providing limited facilities on/near one of the Public Housing Estates **DOES NOT BUILD COMMUNITY!** Nor does it not provide opportunity for Public Housing Tenants to experience life away from the Estates.

**The State Government imposed these Public Housing estates on Carlton, without provision for tenants' multifaceted needs. Governments, both State and Federal, have abrogated their responsibility. State, not local, government must provide adequate funding for dire infrastructure needs and ongoing support and opportunities for its badly neglected tenants. It is imperative that the State Government provide for and fully support this essential infrastructure.**

CRA has for decades sought a community centre / library / visitor centre etc in *central Carlton*, for *all* Carlton. The Carlton community has appealed endlessly to local ALP Member, Hon Bronwyn Pike, other State Government ministers and Premiers Bracks and Brumby for provision of such a centre. On 28 August 2006 then Premier Bracks made a firm and public commitment for State Government funding support, and expressed enthusiastic support for a joint project with Council. All attempts to pursue this promise have foundered. Ministers direct the CRA to the IPC. We have informed Minister Pike and other Ministers that the IPC and OfC services are sorely needed, but are in addition to, not a substitute for Carlton's long sought community centre.

The difference between addressing community disadvantage and developing community is not acknowledged. OoH is unequivocal that this vital Estate infrastructure is inherently different to the CRA's proposal for community infrastructure for the entire Carlton community.

## 4 Infrastructure for *all* Carlton (CRA Vision for Carlton, attached)

CRA seeks State Government and City of Melbourne collaboration to develop infrastructure accessible for *all* Carlton's population, including the 82% not living in Public Housing, including the 16,000 workers and visitors who commute to Carlton daily, the 10,000 plus international students housed in purpose built accommodation in Swanston St. Opportunities for Carlton claim that all Carlton may share facilities to be constructed on or adjacent to the Lygon St / Rathdowne St Public

Housing Estate, at the north-eastern end of Carlton. These, however, are specific to addressing disadvantage and cannot provide for the needs of the broader community. At best, the community is offered only shared meeting space.

Early 2007 CoM management sought a suitable property in the Carlton neighbourhood as potentially suitable for a community centre, but found none. The ideal building is now available.

## 5 The Kathleen Syme Centre (KSC)

A unique opportunity now exists for the City of Melbourne and the State Government to collaborate in the retention of this heritage icon as a Carlton community centre. If sold, the building will be lost to the Carlton community forever. CoM has offered to acquire the ideally located Kathleen Syme Centre for this purpose. The Brumby Government prevaricates. CRA contends:

- **Community** is impossible **without public buildings**
- Carlton's ratepayers, both residents and traders, have no community facility. Resident and Business rates should go towards providing these.
- The Community Centre is **different to** and **complements** Infrastructure Plan Facilities.
- The Community Centre must be inclusive of the **entire** community.
- It is the responsibility of Council to provide this vital infrastructure for the entire Carlton community. The rates of residents and business should not underwrite infrastructure facilities and services aimed at Public Housing tenants, which are the responsibility of the State and Federal Governments.
- It is the State Government which razed Carlton's Victorian era terrace houses and imposed the Public Housing Estates on Carlton. It is State, not Local Government responsibility to provide much-needed services and facilities for its Public Housing Tenants. The State Government must address these responsibilities.
- Lord Mayor Robert Doyle approached the State Government expressing CoM desire to purchase the Kathleen Syme Centre for the CoM, which is a stand alone building and ideally situated for an all inclusive civic centre. The State Government appears to be blocking sale of KSC to CoM, possibly with an intention of selling the entire RWH site to The University of Melbourne (2008 Master Plan). This is the basis of our dispute with Minister Pike. In 2008, Lord Mayor So and CEO Cathy Alexander approached Health Minister Daniel Andrews, with a plan to purchase the building. Departmental bureaucrats are stalling progress on the proposal.
- KSC represents a unique opportunity to acquire a centrally located stand alone public building for Carlton. The City of Melbourne and the State Government must collaborate in the retention of this heritage icon as a Carlton community centre.

May we urge the State Government to share the CRA vision for Carlton: to provide for public housing tenants, and also a central facility which will accommodate the aspirations of the entire Carlton Community. Given the unique opportunity KSC currently presents, this should not be lost.

Greta Bird  
The Carlton Residents Association