

# Fawkner Residents Assoc joins forces with academics to survey local quality of life & mental health

Fawkner Residents Association's (FRA) Mr Joe Perri has announced that concern regarding the consequences of rampant overdevelopment and its social / community impact on the quality of life and mental health has brought Dr Amirul Islam and Dr Jessica Sharp of Swinburne University of Technology and FRA together to initiate a project to survey this matter.

Commenting further, Joe Perri said stress and mental health concerns are not unique to living in inner city suburbs like Fawkner, but they are being magnified as the result of this current wave of high-density development.

"As more and more development is imposed onto suburbs that were never designed to cope with high density living – the residents (new and old) are being forced to deal with the multiple demands of streets choked with traffic and parked cars, public transport that exceeds peak hour and safety capacity, noise, pollution, crime, lost open spaces and parks, and the list goes on", said Joe Perri.

Research suggests that psychological distress is the leading cause of non-fatal burden of disease in Australia with mental health conditions such as depression further associated with chronic diseases and other related concerns.

Joe Perri continued, "As single homes are being replaced by multiple townhouse dwellings or high storey towers in order to accommodate population growth, neighbourhood factors and community infrastructure such as parks, transportation and swimming pools are not increasing in kind".

"It is likely such changes to community character and insufficient infrastructure are impacting quality of life and physical and mental health among community members – and this has given rise to the proposed project".

However, it has not been researched to document the fact and the consequences.

Fawkner Residents Association will reach out to local businesses and community groups for funding to support the project in collaboration with the Swinburne University of Technology.

In the pursuit of development at all costs, government and developers have abandoned the valuable lessons learnt over the centuries about socially responsible and sustainable town planning – hence FRA's very deep concern for the social welfare, multicultural and health needs of Fawkner's residents – in fact throughout the municipality and Melbourne as a whole.

Joe Perri concluded, "Dr Islam, Dr Sharp and I believe the suburb of Fawkner and the municipality of Moreland would be ideal communities to assess the health and wellbeing of residents, in relation to increased development and neighbourhood factors, which could then be expanded into broader and more comprehensive research in metropolitan Melbourne".

It is anticipated that the research would extend for several years, and provide key insights into residents' health and wellbeing over time. While this issue is already apparent to community leaders and resident associations, the aim is to raise awareness to government and policy makers, and to facilitate the development of healthy sustainable communities.

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