

# Overdevelopment threatens multiculturalism and its benefits says Fawkner Residents Assoc

The benefits of multiculturalism that has been the community bedrock of Fawkner are under threat. Modern-day developers regard the suburb as nothing more than an opportunity for a 'quick buck' with no consideration to the long-term social welfare of residents said Fawkner Residents Association's Mr Joe Perri.

In the totality of Melbourne's rich multicultural history, the northern suburb of Fawkner represents only a small chapter in the overall experience. However, it does provide an insight into the benefits of multiculturalism and concerns for the future.

The suburbs of Melbourne's north were once havens that provided locals and newcomer residents from across the globe the opportunity to express their individualism and ethnic cultures. Gardening, arts, crafts, cuisine and other pursuits that provided a reassuring connection to heritage, were able to be accommodated in liveable sized homes, blocks and tranquil suburbs said Mr Perri.

"Barriers, misconceptions and sense of isolation in a foreign land evaporated as multicultural appreciation flourished when neighbours interacted with warmth exchanging fruit, vegetables, preserves, sweets, gifts and joined in family festivities".

Streets and suburbs used to reflect the ethnic heritage of the residents. Not so today – in three, four and five-to-a-block developments with barely room for a decent clothes hoist that are becoming the norm in Fawkner's streets said Mr Perri.

Even owning a pet that barks or meows; starting a home-based business; having an outdoor barbeque; playing a musical instrument; and noise from a party are a challenge in these sterile structures.

Migration has contributed so much to Australia's economic prosperity and social fabric. But overcrowded suburbs, streets choked with parked cars, packed public transport that exceeds peak hour capacity and safety levels, the housing shortage is turning appreciation for migration and multiculturalism into anger and resentment.

Mr Perri continued, "Spring Street and the State Planning Department have decreed that the worst of mankind's creations – the battery hen farm – is the model for homogenised characterless residential development in Moreland and inner-city municipalities and unfettered urban sprawl for the outskirts".

If isolating people into clinical, upright, drive-in drive-out habitations in Fawkner wasn't bad enough, there has been a recent trend with developers requesting Council waive the visitor carpark requirement for their projects.

Other than the developer, how on earth is denying new residents the opportunity to have family and friends visit in anyone's best interests asks Mr Perri.

In a land the breadth of Australia, new migrants coming to inner suburban Melbourne are only being offered 'cookie cutter' dwellings designed to be nothing more than dormitories and no ability for ethnic groups to express their cultures and personalities.

Every lesson learnt over the centuries concerning good sustainable long-term town planning and the benefits of multiculturalism are literally being washed down the drain in the name of short-term financial gains.

"Now is the time for Spring Street to put the brake on overdevelopment and put community cohesion and welfare in the drivers' seat", said Mr Perri.

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Issued by the Fawkner Residents Association

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