

Post coronavirus legacy & overdevelopment concerns dampen Residents Assoc 3rd anniversary

Fawkner Residents Association (FRA) third anniversary and achievements since its inception has been clouded by ongoing concern regarding overdevelopment and the immense disruption and hardship caused by the coronavirus to Fawkner's residents said founder and spokesperson Mr Joe Perri.

Commenting further Joe Perri said whilst FRA has had many successes over the past year that includes increase in members; successfully campaigning to save open space and giving a voice to the suburb's elderly and disabled – these have been clouded by apprehension for the future.

"As a community, we are adjusting to the pandemic way of life and new vocabulary that comprises the words quarantine, lockdown, working remotely, self-isolation and social distancing", said Joe Perri.

"Of even greater concern is the post coronavirus mental health legacy that will leave a deep mark on the lives of families and individuals beyond the end of the pandemic".

Joe Perri described the current situation as a 'Circle of Fear' impacting everyone from the very young to the most senior.

Fear of contracting the virus or dying from infection; fear of being unemployed and how to sustain life in financial hardship; fear of losing the family home; fear of being isolated and detached from friends and family; fear by children that a hug could kill Nanna or Granddad; and fear for the future including prospects for employment.

It's for this reason that FRA called on Moreland to freeze rates for 2020-21 said Joe Perri. "In light of so many people enduring financial distress as the result of being unemployed, forced to take leave without pay or close their businesses, an increase in rates would only serve to compound the hardship of residents.

"In good times of low unemployment, the trickery of raising rates by the CPI or market value property increases was tolerated. To do so in this environment will only serve to fuel deep resentment and tarnish the standing of Council and Councillors".

Looking to the future, the other issues that concern the Residents group is ensuring that the parkland adjacent to the Merri Creek at 84 McBryde Street is saved from development. The area in question is owned by VicRoads who have declared it surplus to their needs and offered it to Moreland Council for acquisition. It also borders a significant area of open space that was acquired by Council in 2019 as the result of a community campaign initiated by the FRA.

Finally, appalling examples of inappropriate high-density development are slowly increasing in number with the Jukes Road area and more recently Hood Crescent being targeted by developers with 'profit before people' the only objective.

New developments in Jukes Road and Hood Crescent are characterised by the deliberate exclusion of senior and disabled buyers with not one project able to meet the Liveable Housing Design gold and platinum levels guidelines.

The latest is five triple storey townhouses on a single block at 122 Jukes Road bringing the recent tally to 32 that purposefully exclude disabled and mature age buyers.

As a result, seniors and mobility challenged are being deprived of access to housing suitable for their needs in the suburb's only area that provides access to shopping, medical, transport and other social amenities.

Then there are 8 townhouses planned for Hood Crescent that will bring the total to 18 in the small enclave. Seniors and disabled who would benefit

immensely from access to the Merri Creek parkland quiet surrounds again find themselves with nothing on offer from developers.

A total of 50 new townhouses and not one dwelling that adheres to the Liveable Housing Design gold and platinum levels guidelines.

"Moreland Council boasts it has many policies that are supposed to ensure equal opportunity, anti-discrimination and dignity of life for all. Yet building application after application that intentionally excludes disabled and seniors by denying them access to amenities specific to their needs is approved by Council or VCAT.

"It's time for Council to seriously address this issue", concluded Joe Perri.

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Issued by the Fawkner Residents Association

Media enquiries: Mr. Joe Perri

Mobile: +61 412 112 545 Email: joe.perri1@gmail.com

Contacts

Joe Perri
+61412112545
[mailto: jperri@joeperry.com.au](mailto:jperri@joeperry.com.au)