

Residents need to get vocal & push back against councils says association founder

Fawkner Residents Association (FRA) founder Mr Joe Perri is adamant that the only hope for residents against local council indifference to the destruction of their neighbourhoods by overdevelopment is to band together, establish (or join) local / community action groups and get vocal.

Commenting further, Joe Perri said, "One priority above all others that new and established resident groups must commit to in the New Year is the accumulation and publication of statistics regarding the impact of over-development on their suburbs and municipalities.

"Since the introduction of residential development zones by the State Government, the failure in terms of delivering more affordable and accessible housing has been immense – especially for young people."

"It's understandable why councils like Moreland don't undertake extensive studies and surveys on the impact of overdevelopment – for same reason cigarette companies don't publish reports on the links between smoking and lung disease".

"Hence the need for resident groups to take matters into their own hands and make the task of quantifying the fallout and decisions of councils a priority".

The social and environmental catastrophe unfolding in Moreland suburbs as the result of unplanned overdevelopment is of immense concern said Joe Perri. Just scratching the surface reveals the tip of a much larger iceberg –

- Over 40% of Moreland's population is now comprised of renters. The dreams of young people and families of home ownership are being crushed while the bank accounts of wealthy landlord millionaires increase.
- In Fawkner, high density development is deliberately excluding seniors, mobility challenged and families with disabled children. When this has been pointed out to Moreland Council – it has been brushed aside.
- In the last six months alone, 20 development projects were approved or are currently under consideration for Fawkner. That's 20 backyards, front yards and nature strips that will be lost.

We all lament the destruction of rainforests – especially when it's referenced in terms of football field sized areas lost. Yet Moreland Council deems it OK to destroy football field sized areas of precious ground cover and habitat for native birds and animals and its resultant environmental, heat island and climate change damage.

- Insufficient onsite carparking and appropriate accommodation for waste collection in new developments is causing conflict between established residents and new arrivals. But developers and Moreland don't care as their mutual obsession is maximising yield.
- Locals are conveniently accused of having a NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) attitude to development. In reality it's developers that have this mindset as displayed recently by the application to construct six triple storey units on a single block in Fawkner by an Elwood based applicant.
- The history of multiculturalism is also under attack. The colour and atmosphere of once thriving ethnic enclaves are being replaced with sterile cookie cutter constructions designed only for the purpose of maximising profit.
- Fawkner's population is forecast to increase by over 3,000 additional residents by 2036. Yet there's no overarching strategy to accommodate this growth with appropriate social, community and recreational facilities.

FRA was established just over 3 ½ years ago out of frustration and disappointment with Moreland Council. From a base of zero, the group has grown steadily year by year and achieved a major milestone when the 600th member joined at the start of this month.

What should concern Moreland Council is that FRA literally doubled its membership from 300 in the last six months.

Joe Perri attributes this growth to resident perception that Council and councillors are out of touch; and have abandoned residents in favour of development at any cost – irrespective of the social and environmental consequences.

Joe Perri concluded, “The one lesson that has resonated the most with me is that silent frustration and anger are regarded as approval for Council’s activities.

“Hence the need for residents – not only in Moreland but throughout Melbourne – to join or establish advocacy groups, become more vocal, quantify and publicise the damage of overdevelopment in terms of the environment, liveability and quality of life / living.

“Finally, and most importantly, change in society is achieved through the actions of the vocal minority and not from silence of the majority”.

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Issued by the Fawkner Residents Association

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