



Town and Country Planning Association Bulletin

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Miles Lewis Honoured

The TCPA congratulates Miles Lewis, a member and former President (1996-1998), for his award of an Order of Australia (AM), 'for services to architectural history, heritage protection and urban planning, particularly through policy development and professional organisations.' in the latest Queen's Birthday Honours.

Miles has been an important advocate for many of the issues which have engaged the TCPA. In the 1970s he was involved in the battle over urban renewal and in drafting the amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act in 1972, and was a member of advisory committees of the Town and Country Planning Board and the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works. In 1977 the TCPA awarded Miles its Certificate of Town Planning Achievement in recognition of his presentation *Melbournia Nostra*, which influenced the Hamer Government's policies on Melbourne.

As President of the TCPA from 1996 to 1998 Miles was a driving force behind the development of 'A Charter for Planning' and 'The Parkland Principles', and was an outspoken advocate for the protection of Melbourne's urban parks and critic of planning policy at the time.

Inner West Integrated Transport Strategy

The TCPA is taking a particular interest in the fate of the 2.5 km river frontage on the Maribyrnong River (Melway map 27) which is currently part of the Commonwealth Department of Defence Explosives Factory site. The site is to be sold for residential development.

The relative isolation of the Explosives Factory site has preserved an area of considerable natural beauty. The view of the tree-filled site and the river from the hill (part of Avondale Heights) overlooking it is breathtaking.

The river winds two-thirds of the way around the border of the City of Maribyrnong for 16 kms. It is the most important environmental and recreational asset of the municipality and of the abutting City of Moonee Valley. Few other urban regions have such a natural asset within recreational walking distance or a short bike ride along quiet residential streets.

The redevelopment presents an opportunity to preserve a wonderful section of natural river frontage for public open space and improve the bicycle and walking network.

Existing riverside paths provide easy pedestrian and bicycle links from Footscray Road, Footscray station, and Williamstown along the river to the Afton Street bridge.

But at this point the only bicycle route is forced to cross the river and cyclists have to negotiate the extremely steep and difficult climb over Avondale Heights on the northern bank. There is no river crossing in the 2.5 km section between Afton Street and Cordite Avenue bridges (Melway 28 A6).

The extension of a bicycle and pedestrian path consistent with the preservation of the natural assets of the river on the flat southern bank of the river and the construction of another bicycle/pedestrian bridge 100 m to the west of Steeles Creek would provide easier and additional access to the river from both the south and north.

It would also enable an easy and direct link between the City of Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong, and form a safe and attractive link between the new residential development and the southern part of the City of Maribyrnong, the Footscray campus of VUT, and beyond. In addition, the Footscray tram could be extended to within 50 metres of a proposed bicycle/pedestrian bridge, opening up beautiful riverside walking and cycling trails to public transport users.

The importance of such a safe and environmentally pleasant alternative transport link cannot be over-emphasised in an area such as the municipality of Maribyrnong, which is characterised by significant barriers to walking and cycling in the form of rail lines, large blocks of industrial land, stretches of high speed main road and heavy truck traffic.

The Maribyrnong River needs more pedestrian/bicycle bridges if it is to be fully exploited as a walking and cycling asset, and not form another barrier to non-motorised travel. Apart from the four road bridges around 1 km apart in Footscray, there are only five river crossings that bicyclists and pedestrians can use in the other 13 km of river bordering the City of Maribyrnong. In contrast, there are 11 river crossings over the Yarra in the first five kilometres upstream of the Charles Grimes Bridge.

The development of the Inner West Integrated Transport Strategy is the opportune time for the State Government and two local governments involved to recognise the opportunities and plan accordingly. The TCPA understands that VicRoads has a road easement at the edge of the site and wants to build a 4 lane main road across the river into Moonee Valley. Road development should not be allowed to override this long-term potential for encouraging non-motorised transport.

Swanston Street

The Association was alarmed at press reports that the MCC was considering re-opening the street to day-time private vehicle traffic. While there remains a level of commercial vehicle traffic (other than public transport) which is hardly consistent with a genuine pedestrian and bicycle precinct, a total re-opening is considered to be a move away from international urban trends to incorporate significant car-free areas in the central business district.

We have written to the MCC opposing any re-opening. Our submission argued:

“To reverse the present policy would fly in the face of international central city planning directions and be a major set-back to current State and local government strategies to encourage healthy sustainable transport.

The widespread adoption of traffic-free areas in cities and towns of all sizes would seem clear evidence of their popularity with users and the support of affected businesses. They represent a small step to the car-free city. They deliver the benefits of increased space for public space and inter-action; provide a better environment for walking and cycling; raise the profile of public transport; reduce localised pollution, and provide the aesthetic and health advantages of a haven from traffic congestion, and the noise and smell of motor vehicles. Such areas serve to provide positive models of the advantages of a car-free city.”

The submission focussed particularly on the importance of Swanston Street as a safe and direct cycle route through the city which:

- links major foci of activity at its southern and northern ends
- serves distinct sources of additional bicycle trips from university students, CBD workers and residents living in or on the fringes of the inner city area, and commuters who depend on a reasonably safe route to link up with the Melbourne bicycle network
- links up with major cycle routes in at least three directions: St Kilda Road, the Yarra routes, and northwards through Carlton and Brunswick.

The TCPA now understands that no formal call for submissions has been made, but has been informed that the Council is indeed “currently reviewing arrangements in Swanston Street”. The Committee will be monitoring developments. Members interested in this issue are advised to watch the Council’s website, www.melbourne.vic.gov.au.

The TCPA is encouraged that three Councillors have indicated agreement with our position.

Green Wedges Campaign

One of our member groups – the Mordialloc Beaumaris Conservation League – has, as a member of *The Defenders of the South East Green Wedge*, joined forces with nine umbrella groups covering 130 environment groups in a coalition to defend the Green Wedges around Melbourne.

The coalition has launched its campaign with a Charter to Save the Green Wedges. The TCPA welcome the philosophy that there is a “need for vision and for policy coordination to protect the green wedges across transport, roads, housing, population policy and local government as well as planning and the environment. Uncoordinated infrastructure and road-building policies put development pressures on the green wedges which are difficult for local governments to resist.”

Amongst other things, the Charter calls on the State Government to:

- prepare legislation to protect the non-urban zones in Melbourne’s green wedges and environmentally important fringe areas;
- define and legislate boundaries to include all of what is left of Melbourne’s green wedges and to link them with an outer ring or green belt of national parks and rural areas.
- resist further rezoning of non-urban green wedge land for residential or industrial subdivisions or for the reduction of allotment sizes in rural and rural living zones;
- coordinate policy to protect the green wedges across transport, roads, housing, population policy, agriculture and local government portfolios as well as planning and environment;
- continue the principle of green wedge protection by developing linear parks along watercourses, and preserving and extending adjacent wetlands, all the way to the sea.
- encourage better transport planning based on European models for improving public transport and existing road systems, instead of freeways which attract new residential and industrial development to the green wedges.

Bulletin Contributions

Members are invited to use the Bulletin to report or comment on planning issues, including local ones, and initiatives relevant to the objectives of the association. News of publications would also be of interest to the Bulletin.

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