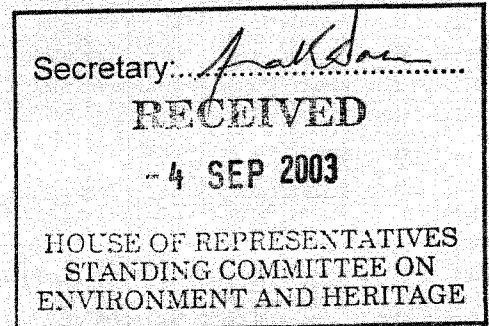


P. & A. Mummery,

Environment and Heritage Committee,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
Canberra,
ACT. 2600.



SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025.

In the 1970s the State Government of Victoria created legislation that 'locked up' thousands of acres of mostly privately owned land into urban green zones. This legislation did not effectively address the aspirations and needs of our rapidly expanding population in relation to the future availability of affordable land for housing which together with environmental concerns are two of the most contentious issues now faced by our current Federal and State Governments.

Our submission relates primarily to privately owned land within the urban green zones surrounding Melbourne, specifically situated within the City of Manningham. This area is closed to the general public and totally residential in nature with few existing agricultural activities due to council restrictions, advanced age of owners, surrounding community lifestyle expectations, climate change, drought, economic forces and lot sizes not being commercially viable in 2003. Physical characteristics of land within this area are identical to Manningham urban residential zoned areas.

Within the past twenty-five years we have experienced vast changes to the whole of Manningham including major road and freeway construction which has resulted in a building boom with subsequent pollution problems and total urbanization of the area in character. During this time we have come to understand and live with the magnitude of the problems faced by urban green zone broad acre land owners whose properties have become enclosed within a residential area. We are affected by a devastating drought and often unfair restrictions influenced by vocal anti-progress groups and an openly hostile urban residential community who do not understand that there has been a gradual warming of the urban green zones areas due to bitumen roads, houses, home heating, cars and everything

else suburbia brings with it. All this has had a detrimental influence on the viability of primary production in our urban green zone areas, making them a redundant rural commodity in 2003.

According to the Manningham Council's Botanical, Visual and Zoological Study, our local urban green zones are all affected by canopy die back, noxious weeds, feral animals, vermin and soil erosion with a major problem being lack of reticulated sewerage in Manningham, which has resulted in untreated effluent being discharged into urban green zone waterways creating significant pollution.

The Sustainable Cities 2025: Discussion Paper suggests a set of visionary objectives which should include preservation of bushland and urban green zones, equitable access to efficient use of energy, including renewable energy sources incorporating eco-efficiency principles into new buildings and housing together with provisions for plans that accommodate lifestyle and business opportunities.

It would seem that the opposition by Planning Authorities to any kind of development whether for rural industry, business, eco-efficient housing, alternative means of transport, wildfire risk management or installation of renewable energy source infrastructure within privately owned green zone land has become a primary cause of the lack of integration of natural and built environments and resulted in massive urban sprawl with limited provision for future public recreation or community activities.

Positive and innovative policies for the urban green zone areas are unlikely to be achieved in the near future when State and Local Governments disregard positive recommendations in regards to the above, in favour of the status quo. This negative attitude has failed to enhance or preserve the natural environmental values of green zone land to the extent that land degradation in many areas is now likely to be irreversible. Effective maintenance has become onerous, costly and too labour intensive for both council and private land owners who see no long term solutions likely to be found while current planning policy excludes their input.

To date submissions from land owners which provide innovative planning options have been rejected in favour of emotional visions from vocal minority groups who make no physical or financial contribution to the maintenance of privately owned land within the urban green zones.

In conclusion, it is time for opponents of change to accept the fact that urban green zones cannot be sustained in their present form and if governments, councils and the whole community of Victoria do not accept a meaningful long term plan for development of innovative, sustainable communities and maintenance within urban green zone areas, then continuation of the same planning and controls will produce what they have done in the past – environmental degradation of these areas but at an accelerated rate.

We are concerned conservationists, but we need flexible and innovative options available that allow more people to live and work within the urban green zone areas surrounding Melbourne, to share, enjoy and contribute both physically and financially towards maintaining the environment. We believe this would benefit the whole community of Melbourne and Victoria, by allowing more employment, residential living space for our growing population with recreational use via the extension of linear parks, walking and bicycle tracks etc., vastly improved fire protection for all residents due to improved access, improve conditions required for vegetation regrowth and help provide funds to promote eco-efficiency principles including sustainable water and stormwater management systems.