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Elaboration of Original Representation (280) for Lauderdale Quay Hearing by

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Focus:

'Loss of Amenity to the Local Community'

Outline of Presentation:

Introduction

Defining Community Amenity and the Impacts of Its Loss

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- 2. Lifestyle:**
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Introduction:

As a current resident of the South Arm Peninsula I made my initial submission on the basis of my life experience and that of my family, friends and neighbors who lived through the social, environmental and cultural upheaval caused to the suburb of Williamstown Victoria, by a very large housing and retail development on the Rifle Range in that suburb.

Whilst there are many highly educated experts involved in this current assessment process who are able to speak and write with great authority and expertise on engineering, construction, scientific, environmental and economic grounds etc, there does not appear to be the same level of 'experts' representing the field of human needs and the important elements of their identification with their 'community amenities'.

In other words, the ordinary citizens who will be most impacted by this project and will have to live with its consequences must represent themselves as best they can and trust that their views will be held in the same high regard.

I believe that due to my experience I have a unique insight to offer regarding the likely impact the Lauderdale Quay Development will have on the fabric of the community of Lauderdale and the Peninsula who have strongly and constantly indicated their objection to this project over the past 5 years.

Defining Community Amenity and the Impacts of Its Loss:

2 Landscape and Scenery:

Are Landscape and Scenery a Community Amenity?

To myself, my family and the majority of people both from the South Arm Peninsula, visitors from other areas of Tasmania, interstate and overseas whom I have canvassed on this question, the common agreement is that scenery and landscape – including its living creatures, play an enormously important role in a community's well being and sense of being in a 'good' place.

They are an important reason why we choose to live in a particular locality or visit it or use its facilities for recreation and relaxation.

All age groups and abilities can enjoy scenery and landscape regardless of their socio economic, intellectual or physical status. It is free and available to all, with Tasmania's beautiful coast line one of the few currently left in the world that is unsullied by developments inhibiting everyone's right to enjoy it, and regularly advertised by Tourism Tasmania as such to tourists and locals alike.

J.B Jackson (1909 – 1996) ex Professor of Landscape History -Harvard University, defines a sense of place' in his book 'A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time' 1994

'We now use the current version (of a sense of place) to describe the atmosphere to a place, the quality of its environment. We recognize that certain localities have an attraction which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well being and which we want to return to, time and time again. It is not a temporary response, for it persists and brings us back.

The experience varies in intensity; it can be private and solitary, or convivial and social. And what automatically ensues, it seems to me, is a sense of fellowship with those who share the experience, and the instinctive desire to return, to establish a custom of repeated ritual.'

If the Lauderdale Quay project goes ahead there will be a loss of natural resources to this community which cannot be rectified by any amount of proposals to include public amenities in the development.

Williamstown lost the opportunity to preserve as open space for community and public amenity, the wonderful unspoiled tract of land that was the Williamstown Rifle Range. The decision to develop the site for housing and retail thereby denied all future generations in one of Australia's largest cities, a unique amenity for recreation on the shores of Port Phillip Bay, of easy access to many thousands of the city's residents.

In addition, this enormous housing and retail development totally destroyed the 'sense of place' enjoyed by the residents of the oldest and most historically significant suburb in Melbourne.

In 1998 the Australian Heritage Commission commissioned a study to help better understand the way people value and appreciate scenery which concluded that:

Definition of scenic amenity:

'Scenic amenity is a measure of the relative contribution of each place in the landscape to the collective community appreciation of open space as viewed from places that are important to the public.'

Whilst all people appreciate the aesthetics of landscapes, the complex interaction between our psyche and the environment has contributed to a lower understanding of scenic amenity compared to some other values of open space.

Because of the diversity of opinion about scenery, there has been a tendency to assume that it is subservient to other practical needs of our community.

By assessing and recognising the scenic amenity of open space, governments can contribute to the healthy lifestyle of people who live in or visit a particular region.

How do we put an economic value on the community amenity that is Ralphs Bay, and the daily pleasure that is enjoyed by viewing it as it currently exists, with its wonderful mountain backdrop, changes in tide and colour, bird life and seasonal variations, except to say such pleasures are priceless and should remain for all future generations to enjoy?

No artificial amenity can replace the original landscape and scenery that it will destroy forever.

2. Lifestyle:

Is Lifestyle a Community Amenity?

'Lifestyle' is variously defined by dictionaries as

The living conditions, behavior and habits that are typical or chosen by a particular person or group of people (Collins English Dictionary)

ALSO

A way of living of individuals, households, and societies, which they manifest in coping with their physical, psychological, social, and economic environments on a day-to-day basis.

Lifestyle is expressed in both work and leisure behavior patterns and (on an individual basis) in activities, attitudes, interests, opinions, values, and allocation of income. It also reflects people's self image or self concept; the way they see themselves and believe they are seen by the others.

Lifestyle is a composite of motivations, needs, and wants and is influenced by factors such as culture, where they live, family, reference groups, and social class. (Business Dictionary.com)

With these definitions in mind it is obvious that the current lifestyle enjoyed by the residents of Lauderdale and the South Arm Peninsula would be manifestly affected if this project is given the 'go ahead'. In fact I find it well nigh impossible to establish any real benefit that this community in general would gain from the project at any stage of its development.

The South Arm Peninsula in general and Lauderdale in particular caters for a population demographic which covers a wide spectrum of ages, professions, trades and interests, but in the main it is seen as an affordable, comfortable place to live for those in the average to mid range of income. Real estate prices in the area reflect this.

There is a strong rural atmosphere and pride in the various activities, clubs and sporting groups. Land and water activities are varied and access to walking and riding trails, boat ramps, surfing beaches, windsurfing bay, bird watching etc, is easy, maintained to an adequate standard and free.

Crime statistics are low and the residents have a sense of feeling safe in their environment.

The current place in which we live is one with a small population, a village atmosphere in Lauderdale proper, ample services of good quality for everyday needs, great views and the advantage of a capital city within relatively easy reach, but far enough away to not impinge on the 'country' atmosphere.

Development on a small scale has never been inhibited and is quite readily absorbed into this lifestyle which is far more urban than suburban.

What benefits can this project give to this lifestyle?

Work

The IIS talks about employment benefits, however my experience is that during the development of the Williamstown Rifle Range, there were limited employment opportunities for local workers with most coming from large contracting companies who provided the required machinery and employees. There was even the provision of a food van so the local shops gained minimal benefit.

It is highly likely that this will be the case in this project due to its very specialised nature.

Local trades people did gain some work in the later stages of the Rifle Range project, however did not really engage heavily in the 'hassles' of bidding for work which was not likely to be ongoing, preferring to stay with their established client base in order to maintain ongoing community support in consideration of the 'backlash' of public opinion about the project.

Physical

In terms of recreational uses, the IIS concedes that during and after the building phase there will be a substantial impact on water and shoreline activities.

Windsurfers will permanently lose the best site for their sport in Southern Tasmania and those who enjoy observing their skills will have to seek alternative diversions.

Birdwatchers, walkers and bike riders are unlikely to wish to take a front row position to witness, hear or smell the destruction of vital bird habitats, and a beautiful bay.

Experienced recreational fishermen already scoff at the proposed fishing jetties around the Quay. They currently have access across the Peninsula to many far better foreshore and coastal fishing spots with much less likelihood of their catch being tainted by the unhealthy sediments which may linger around the development.

With the current estimate of the duration of the project to completion being upwards of 17 years this equates to almost a whole generation of waiting for access to facilities which the majority of current residents would rate as of absolutely no benefit to their current lifestyle. Conversely, the construction phase and its aftermath are seen as potential destroyers of their current way of life.

Social

Community cohesion has been another area that the IIS concedes as potentially at risk, but can, according to the mitigation strategy, be mitigated where adequate community consultation, engagement in planning, discussion of community values etc. take place.

This is all very nebulous and not measurable in terms defining what is meant by 'adequate', 'engagement', who would be involved and what the 'programs would actually be.

I believe from my experience and observations in Williamstown that community dysfunction will commence in the following ways if the project is approved.

- Upon approval of the development, the majority of the residents will be very dissatisfied with the outcome (as shown by regular surveys of their feelings about the project) and will express their concerns locally, through the media and politically.
In Williamstown a 'them and us' mentality became evident and some local businesses and individuals were seen as having been self interested and were ostracized by those who had been against the project, losing business as a result.

There was a great deal of community anguish and feelings of having been let down by the decision makers. Some families put their houses on the market as they feared the impact of the development on their property values, children's schooling and the changes that were now inevitable.

- Upon Commencement, the sight of the huge scale of the construction on the locality, - particularly as viewed from the Lauderdale Primary School, businesses on South Arm Road and all who travel along it - with its traffic, noise and smells that will be ongoing for many years, will cause further anguish and stress.

This will particularly affect those who have concerns for the natural environment and who cannot escape the constant visual impact of the site draining, the impact on the bay, its wildlife and birds.

It was at this stage in my Williamstown experience that reality really set in, and for the first time there was the visual impact of the site works, commencement of traffic congestion and noise.

The Williamstown Technical College is next to the Rifle Range and was subject to long term and extensive road widening, followed by ongoing heavy traffic and constant noise. Traffic lights were installed for the first time in Williamstown's history, and the number of properties for sale increased well above the norm.

A neighborhood investor seeking other properties as investments was able to purchase houses close to the site for much less than their valuation prior to commencement of the site works.

As people who have been long in a locality move away from an area, the community can begin to lose its character. This is particularly evident when dwellings are purchased at bargain prices by opportunistic investors and permanent residents are replaced by shorter term renters.

- Completion of the project will see the full effect on what remains the South Arm Community's lifestyle with a population increase estimated at about 1300, which will make up over one third of Lauderdale's residents.

This will represent a huge change in the demographic profile of the area with the canal population being in the main from an homogenous social group with different values and aspirations to the current residents.

If they were truly interested in the environment or the natural beauty of the area or a country village atmosphere they wouldn't be living on a canal development!

The traffic increase will be exponential and the natural landscape and scenery changed forever.

Property values are unlikely to have risen but rates are likely to have increased substantially to cope with the demand for additional services and infrastructure maintenance.

A few local businesses will probably survive and thrive; others will face stiff competition from the retail complex within the development which will be geared to suit the new resident's tastes and spending power. It is not clearly defined in the IIS what those retail and business outlets may be.

In Williamstown there were competitive retail businesses opened within the housing development which saw the demise of a number of long established local businesses including a large independent supermarket which had initially supported the development.

The new residents will be a strong political force in the area, and will have the numbers to shape the neighborhood to suit their desired lifestyle. For example in Williamstown garage sales are no longer allowed to be visible from the street as they are deemed to be 'untidy'!

Whether the local clubs and community groups gain a great deal of input from this group is questionable. We did not find that to be the case in Williamstown as the new residents there were much more interested in city based activities and culture.

In my original submission, I covered in some detail further demographic changes which occurred in the entire suburb which affected people's way of life.

So where is the value to the community's lifestyle in this scenario?

It will be changed forever by entirely artificial rather than natural organic means.

3. General Character of the Area:

What Makes the General Character of an Area a Community Amenity?

Definition: The character of a neighborhood is an amalgam of the many components that give an area its distinctive personality. These components can include land use; views; street layout; scale, type, and style of development; historic features; patterns and volumes of traffic; noise levels; and other physical or social characteristics that help define a community.

However, not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few determining elements.

New York City CEQR Manual 2007

I have previously dealt with several of the components which make up the general character of the Lauderdale area and which I believe will be seriously devalued by this development.

There still remain the following important elements of community amenity which I also believe will be adversely affected – traffic volumes and safety, Lauderdale Primary School, air quality and noise.

Traffic

Traffic volumes and road safety issues are dealt with relatively dismissively in the IIS, with the provision of roundabouts and slip lanes seen as adequate to deal with the increased volumes of road traffic and pedestrians as the project matures.

During the construction phase (17 years!) there will be a constant heavy stream of construction, haulage and trade vehicles entering and departing the site. This volume of traffic will continue to increase as the site develops and residents move in.

The IIS indicated surprisingly that taking into account the 'crash history' of South Arm Road and surrounding areas, it is considered that road safety in general will not be adversely affected by the proposed development!! What does this mean?

One of the pleasures of living on the Peninsula is the relatively low level of traffic to and from the area, being able to park readily at all the facilities and the fact that very few children need to use school crossings to reach the Primary School. There is a 'bottle neck' at times at the Acton Road intersection which will become even more difficult to navigate during the construction phase, and even more so, once a potential extra 1000 cars enter the traffic stream by the completion of the project.

How many additional roundabouts and traffic lights will be added to our trip to the city in an attempt to deal with these problems is still to be discovered.

The impact on the speed of response of emergency services is difficult to quantify, as is the effect of exhaust emissions on the school playground, and are an important factor of concern for all residents.

As indicated in my initial submission, traffic volumes were one of the major problems engendered by the Rifle Range Development and one of the major impacts of change for the worse on the suburb's lifestyle.

What is the benefit to the community of exponentially increased traffic flows with all the associated risks and delays?

Lauderdale Primary School

This school has a current enrolment of around 570 students, who, if this project goes ahead, will be in close proximity (over more than 11 generations of students) to a very large construction site. This is a direct and quite hideous contrast to their current proximity to a quiet corner of Ralphs Bay. The site will be exuding odours, noise and traffic which will be impossible for the students to ignore and which will impinge on the quality of their daily school experience.

It may well become harder for the school to attract the high quality of teachers which it currently enjoys as if given a choice, most people do not want to work in close proximity to heavy traffic, smells and noise. Parents may also choose to enroll their children elsewhere for health and safety reasons.

As I have already indicated in my previous submission, the traffic problems around the schools in Williamstown became difficult to manage after the completion of the development, because it was no longer safe for children to walk to school as they had done for generations in what had been such a quiet suburb with no through traffic.

Who benefits from this situation which increases risk to the community's children?

Air Quality and Noise

It is admitted in the IIS that during the construction phase, that at times, for in excess of 40 months, nuisance odour may 'slightly' exceed acceptable limits at a number of residences along South Arm Road, however we may be comforted by the mitigations that are to be applied through 'appropriate means'. To me this means that anyone traveling along South Arm Road, living beyond South Arm Road on a windy day (common) and the Primary School may also be subject to these odours. It is certainly difficult to ascertain what are 'acceptable limits' to the unfortunate people who have to bear this stench in and around their neighborhood and homes. It is obvious that this 'nuisance odour' will make it harder to sell property, enjoy the outdoor environment or conduct business whilst this is occurring for years.

In regard to dust and particulate impacts we are assured that they are unlikely to exceed air quality goals. Who decides what is acceptable and what will the local community be able to do about air quality and smells if they become unbearable?

The noise of construction is another factor to consider in respect to loss of benefit to the community and once again I am unsure as to how this is to be minimized and whether any shift workers in the area will still be able to enjoy an uninterrupted sleep. It seems also possible that the noise may continue for 24 hours at times.

Considering that currently we do not have to endure in this community problems and risks associated with traffic volumes, children's schooling, air quality and noise, what benefit is the General Character of the Community to gain from this endurance?

Conclusion:

The Community Amenity of the South Arm Peninsula is so strongly bound in its local natural environment that to interfere with it would have to return an enormous benefit if the social fabric is not to be destroyed along with its distinctive character.

This development with its proposal of an improved lifestyle just doesn't have the potential to provide what it claims to this community, who already enjoy what they have.

For the amenity of this community the proposed Lauderdale Quay Development adds up to a very large negative return and should therefore be denied.