

Submission Modernising Victoria's Planning Act

1. As floodplain manager I have been involved in Planning Permit Referrals for approximately 15 years and it occupies more than 50% of my workload.
2. I believe that the Victorian Planning Provisions, with its staggered approach to Planning through Zoning and Overlays is an excellent system with VCAT as independent arbiter.
3. I accept that the process of permit applications do take time, but that is for very good reasons. Permits are legally binding documents and what the permit allows (buildings works etc) will have a lasting impact on the environment. Exemptions and faster decision making processes, will soon conflict with environmental sustainable outcomes, and therefore detrimental to planning.
4. Improvements could be made. The emphasis of planning should be on the origin of new development which is more likely than not, the subdivision. Provided this aspect is carefully handled it could easily be set up to make future development on subdivided sites free of further planning permits. What I mean is that as referral officer I first receive planning permit application for subdivision, followed later by planning permit applications for a dwelling and again later for a swimming pool and extensions. I talk about processes over many years. It would be simpler for all parties if at the subdivision stage the building envelope is determined, which would allow ongoing development like sheds, swimming pool and extensions to proceed (within this envelope) without planning approval.
5. Such a change will require the inclusion, at the application stage, of an environmental assessment report which should take into account environmental factors including native veg, , flooding, waterways and drainage etc.
6. Zonings could be improved if more uses are prohibited outright. In particular the Farming Zone hardly prohibits anything which results in a large number of permit applications, which have nothing to do with rural use and often have a detrimental impact on the preservation of farmland for future generations.
7. Referral Authorities are reluctant to object outright to permit applications which result to approvals with numerous and onerous conditions which are difficult if not impossible to enforce or control.
8. I am very concerned that environmental sustainability is hardly mentioned in this discussion paper, this should be the basis for all current and future planning.
9. VPP Clause 62-02.1 which states
“ Buildings or works with an estimated cost of \$1,000,000 or less carried out by or on behalf of a municipality. should be scrapped.” This Clause is definitely not in the interest of Referral Authorities.

If you want me to elaborate on raised points or discuss issues please feel free to contact me.

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