



ratio consultants newsletter April 2010

this months featured project is:

91-93 Tram Road, Doncaster

Ratio Consultants is proud to announce that a development for a ten storey building containing 82 apartments at 91-93 Tram Road, Doncaster has received approval from the Minister for Planning. The project is anticipated to cost in the order of \$25 million and result in approximately 200 construction jobs.

The application is located within the new Activity Centre Zone and on the periphery of the Doncaster Hill Principal Activity Centre. The challenge with this application was to strike an appropriate balance between achieving the broader strategic goals of the State and Local Planning Policy Framework and the amenity expectations of the single storey dwelling to the south of the subject site, which was located outside the Activity Centre Zone.

The application was supported by the City of Manningham, however an appeal was lodged by a single objector.

Given the strong strategic imperative to redevelop the site as well as the benefit to the local economy, the Minister for Planning called-in the application and resolved to issue a planning permit, thereby avoiding the need for a lengthy and costly VCAT process.

Ratio Consultants provided town planning and traffic engineering advice from the initial inception of the design right through to the issue of the Planning Permit. For further details, please contact Sam D'Amico from the Planning Department or Russell Fairlie from the Traffic Department on 9429 3111.



Image courtesy of Peter Sgourakis Architects

Major Cases List at VCAT

As of 3 May 2010, all applications with a development cost of \$5 million or more will be heard by the VCAT Major Cases List. The purpose of the Major Cases List is to speed up decision making for major applications. VCAT are aiming for decisions within 16 weeks of lodging the appeal.

The Tribunal has stated that applications involving development worth \$2.73 billion were initiated in 2008-2009. The Tribunal and State Government hope that the new list will help boost Victoria's economy.

VCAT has stated that they propose to introduce a further sub-list to deal with short cases, which involve limited parties and would take less than 2 hours to hear. Further information on this list will follow shortly.

Ratio Team Member walked 100km for Oxfam

Sam D'Amico, one of Ratio's finest, joined by his wife Natalie, Jeff Gallagher and Ila Sachdeva embarked on a ridiculously long walk, 100km to be exact, to raise money for Oxfam.

More than 700 teams of four took part in Oxfam TRAILWALKER Melbourne on the weekend of 16-18 April 2010. The object was to walk 100km within 48 hours. Not being satisfied with the challenge, Sam and his team completed the walk in 27 hours and 1 minute!

The 2010 trail started at Jells Park in Wheelers Hill and finished at Wesburn Park in the Yarra Valley.



Oxfam Australia works in 27 countries around the world including Indigenous Australia. By supporting Oxfam Australia through this event, participants and donors are making a tremendous difference to people's lives around the world.

As donations do not close until mid-May, your support in this event will be greatly appreciated by not only Sam and his team, but the many underprivileged people that will benefit from your generous donation.

You can make donations by going to www.oxfam.org.au/trailwalker/melbourne/team/252 and following the prompts. Thank you for your support.

This issue, we cast our eyes on Andrew Cook - Traffic Engineer



- Passions:** Going down the beach; hanging out with friends and watching the Hawks win another flag.
- Favourite Website:** failblog, emailsfromcrazypeople.com and thereifixedit
- Happiest day of your life:** First proper pay check. I'd been a student for a long, long time.
- What am I reading right now:** * The girl with the dragon Tattoo. * Picture of Dorian Gray. * Speed reading previous reports on Box Hill Hospital



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Stony Point - Cowes Car Ferry

Meinhardt is the principal consultant to Bass Coast and Mornington Peninsula Shire Councils for the feasibility study for a new car ferry to operate across Western Port from Stony Point to Cowes. Ratio Consultants have been appointed by Meinhardt to assist with the traffic engineering aspects of the project.

Ratio has provided input to the concept design of on-shore parking, queuing and loading/unloading areas, based in part on surveys and analysis of similar (but larger scale) facilities for the existing Sorrento - Queenscliff car ferry.

A key issue is the seasonal variation in likely demand for the new ferry service, and the interaction between generated traffic and Summer holiday traffic (especially in Cowes).

Chatswood Chase Shopping Centre

Ratio Consultants is working with retail management leaders Colonial First State to improve the Chatswood Chase Shopping Centre, one of Sydney's best performing retail centres.

Like its contemporary, the Chadstone Shopping Centre in Melbourne, Chatswood Chase has recently been expanded and upgraded with commensurate additions to its multi-level car parking facility. The progressive development pattern has resulted in an irregular car parking layout that is presenting it's shoppers with some confusion. The challenge for the Ratio Traffic Team has been to assist in consolidating the staged car park improvements to create a safer and more efficient facility.

The project is a long term one and will ultimately involve measures such as new linemarking arrows, directional signage and wayfinding information.

For any further information, please contact Tina Webb.



Proposed changes to the Planning and Environment Act

Currently the State Government is undertaking a review of the Planning and Environment Act in an attempt to free up and improve the planning system.

The draft Bill was released in December 2009 and gave stakeholders the opportunity to consider and comment on the proposed changes prior to the introduction of the Bill to Parliament. Submissions to the draft Bill closed in early February. Ratio Consultants has responded to the proposed changes to the Act, contained within the Draft Planning and Environment Act (General) Bill 2009.

The proposed changes to the Act have implications for the development industry and seek to change the process in which planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments area assessed. Key changes to the Act are summarised below.

Planning Scheme Amendments

Currently, Council's have the power to abandon a Planning Scheme Amendment during any phase of the process, with no opportunity for an applicant to seek a review of Council's determination. This ability allows Council's to hold applicants to ransom and can have quite lengthy and costly ramifications.

The proposed changes seek to introduce a 'streamlined' process for minor changes to policies, corrections to planning schemes etc.

Of particular interest is a significant change which will allow the Minister to authorise an applicant to prepare an amendment and carry out specific procedural steps, such as notification, reporting and referral to a panel, if the Minister forms the view that the proposed amendment has merit.

This would mean that an applicant could prepare a Planning Scheme Amendment in the knowledge that a full, transparent and considered process will be undertaken and not abandoned at the eleventh hour.

In short, in our opinion, throwing the baby out with the bath water is probably unnecessary. Rather, if time limits and review rights were introduced, this would address the majority of the concerns we have with the current system.

Planning Permit Applications

The Draft Bill will enable the Minister to declare a use or development, or a class of use or development, to be of State significance. For developments considered to be of State significance, the Minister will immediately become the Responsible Authority. We are advised that this process has been designed to ensure that the level of information, community engagement, assessment and review is proportionate to the significance of the development.

The jury is out as to what constitutes 'State significance'.

Planning Permit Amendments

At present, a permit applicant needs to apply directly to VCAT to amend a permit issued by the tribunal.

The changes to the Act will seek to allow Council the power to consider planning permit amendments where the Tribunal issued the permit, thereby alleviating pressures facing the Tribunal at the moment.

This is eminently sensible.

Other notable changes to planning permit amendments would see the abolishment of secondary consent amendments, normally used for minor amendments that do not require advertising. This would require all amendments to be undertaken under Section 72 or 87 of the Act, which will allow Council the discretion to advertise an amendment.

We have grave reservations with this as secondary consent (i.e. minor amendments to endorsed plans) has a legitimate place in the development approvals process.

We will keep you informed with the progress of the amendment Bill.

quirky facts

Australia is the sixth largest country in the world. It's about the same size as the 48 mainland states of the USA and 50% larger than Europe, but has the lowest population density in the world - only two people per square kilometre.

We have over 6000 species of flies, about 4000 species of ants, and there are about 350 species of termites in Australia.

There are more than 150 million sheep in Australia, and only some 20 million people.