



ratio consultants newsletter October 2009

this months featured project is...

The Pelaco Building

Ratio Consultants was appointed by Moniton Pty Ltd to seek planning permit approval for a five storey office building with associated car parking for the landmark Pelaco Building, at the top of Richmond Hill. The plans prepared by renowned architectural practice Rothe Lowman sought to rework a previous planning approval obtained for the site that was no longer viable. That permit was the subject of a lengthy VCAT hearing and, at the time, was a significant case in which the weight attached to Melbourne 2030 was first discussed.

However, with the passage of time, the serviced apartments sought for the land was no longer appropriate, and the client sought to introduce office floor space, requiring a significant increase in parking provision on a site already constrained for car parking. The application raised many challenges to the consultant team, including:

- seeking further car parking dispensation in an area where car parking is widely acknowledged as being at a premium;
- resolving interface issues with surrounding residents such as overlooking, building massing, loss of sunlight, noise etc, noting that the site is located immediately adjacent to low scale residential development to it's east and west;
- visual bulk of the additional building and the impact on the famous 'Pelaco' sign; and
- resolving concerns about the additional traffic likely to be generated as a result of the proposed development.

The matter was scheduled for a full merits hearing at VCAT. However, Ratio actively pursued negotiations with the City of Yarra and all five objectors with a view to resolving the matter prior to the hearing. We are successful in such negotiations and the Yarra City also supported the proposal. A planning permit was then issued on 1 May 2009 following a consent order issued by the Tribunal.

Ratio was pleased to be involved with, and actively assist in resolving this significant application.



Image courtesy of 'Walking Melbourne' website

DFU work for DPCD

Earlier this year, the Minister for Planning announced that he would consider calling in a number of key projects in order to facilitate State significant projects. The Minister was keen to help facilitate key projects in order to stimulate the economy through job creation and the fulfilment State Planning Policy initiatives. Ratio Consultants was one of three consultants selected to assist the Development Facilitation Unit to help deal with the influx of requests for intervention that were received soon after the Minister's initial announcement.

Ratio's involvement including carrying out discussions with proponents and Council, information gathering and the provision of a preliminary assessment of the appropriateness or otherwise of Ministerial intervention. Ratio staff assisted with presentations to the Development Facilitation Unit and the Ministerial Taskforce charged with the responsibility of considering such requests. The work has provided valuable experience for our staff and further strengthened our working relationship with senior management within the Department. We look forward to building upon these relationships for future projects for our own clients in due course.

Melbourne Wholesale Fruit & Vegetable Market

Ratio Consultants was engaged by Bovis Lend Lease during the bid phase for the design and construction of the new Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market in Epping. The core of the project will be the relocated Melbourne Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Market and the National Flower Centre, currently located in Footscray Road.

The goal of our traffic input has been to ensure the long term logistical need of buyers and sellers are catered for via a connected internal and external network of roads and paths. The safety of road users and the functionality and needs of market users are the primary focus of our assessment and design.

Ratio Consultants gave traffic engineering advice on the internal and external road layout, pedestrian facilities, truck loading areas and parking areas. We prepared functional layouts for internal and external intersections and prepared a Traffic Impact Report for inclusion in the bid for the project.

The Minister of Major Projects recently announced that Bovis Lend Lease as the preferred builder for the design and construction of the markets. We look forward to working with Bovis Lend Lease in the successful delivery of the Melbourne Markets Relocation Project.



This issue, we cast our eyes on James Brownlie

Passions:

When I am not spending time with my family and friends I enjoy mountain biking and road riding. Nothing beats the sense of accomplishment you feel after completing a long and gruelling ride.

Favourite Website:

www.travellingfit.com A great website that advertises marathons and half marathons in exotic locations such as along the Great Wall of China or in the Polar Circle. I am keeping a close eye on the New York Marathon!

Happiest day of your life:

My two happiest days are the birth of my children, closely followed by the day I finished the Alpine Classic for the first time (a 200km bike ride which includes climbs up Tawonga Gap, Falls Creek and Mt Buffalo).

What am I reading right now:

Mental Speed Bumps; the smarter way to tame traffic by David Engwicht, collected verses by Banjo Patterson and Ride On the bicycle Victoria Magazine.



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Social Housing . . . make it happen

Ratio Consultants is pleased to be playing a role in the Commonwealth Government's social housing initiative funded under by the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, in which \$6 billion will be tipped into the construction of new social housing in Australia. The initiative is expected to provide thousands of new social housing units across Victoria to meet the needs of low income Victorians who seek well located, affordable accommodation.

Central to the program are changes to the way in which planning approval is obtained, providing much greater certainty for all parties. Firstly, a proposal must be recommended for funding by DHS as a priority project, and secondly, it must be certified by a qualified town planning practitioner. Ratio Consultants is a certified town planning firm.

Some of the key features include:

- the town planning application is made directly to the Minister for Planning for approval through the Department of Planning and Community Development.
- the Minister will refer the application to the local Council for comments, which are allowed 14 days to respond.
- the application is exempt from advertising and appeal rights.
- the Minister is making speedy decisions on applications in no more than 35 days from the date of lodgement.
- there is an opportunity to provide relatively lower rates of car parking for social housing, based on the specific needs of future residents.

Ratio Consultants have been involved with certifying a series of social housing projects, in both the inner city and outer suburban areas and are actively working with DPCD to facilitate outcomes under the initiative. Our feedback from clients is that this process can turn what was previously an unviable project into a success outcome. For any enquiries please contact either Colleen Peterson or Robbie McKenzie.

Ratio leads the way in reforming car wash controls

Following a string of contradictory Council and VCAT decisions regarding the correct application of the planning scheme provisions relating to car wash facilities, Ratio Consultants, with the backing of the Australian Car Wash Association, wrote to the Minister for Planning requesting that the provisions be amended.

Clause 52.13 previously stated (our underlining):

Requirements to be met

Land may be used for a car wash only if the following requirements are met. A permit may be granted to vary the requirements, if the responsible authority considers a better design solution will result.

The difficulty was that the various provisions in this clause were not designed for the modern hand-wash facilities, and requirements such as the need for 10 queuing spaces before entry to a car wash were clearly inappropriate and unnecessary. However, in order to waive the requirement the responsible authority (Council or, upon review, VCAT) had to be satisfied that "a better design solution" would result.

Ratio leads the way for sustainable transport

Back in 2007, Ratio prepared an award winning report on Sustainable Transport Policy and Parking Rates for the City of Port Phillip (as outlined in our April 2009 Newsletter). That recommended reduced parking provision rates for development proposals including small/affordable residential apartments, especially when:

- * located within or near Activity Centres;
- * no more than 200 metres from fixed rail public transport;
- * no more than 400 metres from a supermarket;
- * located in an area with strict control of on street parking controls;
- * including various other "green" travel initiatives

Similar sustainability principles have been included in a 2008 report on Residential Parking Rates for the City of Melbourne, with specific focus on areas outside the Capital City Zone. The report's recommendation was to apply a maximum of one parking space per dwelling in these fringe areas. Ratio's recommendation was the basis of Council's Planning Scheme Amendment C.133 in the form of a Parking Precinct Plan (Schedule to Clause 52.06, with supporting decision guidelines and coverage maps). The Amendment was the subject of a Panel Hearing in June 2009 and last week the Panel published its report supporting the proposed amendment.

The parking rates recommended in the Port Phillip report have been supported generally by that Council, and have assisted in achieving cost-effective outcomes for Planning Permit applicants (either directly or after VCAT review). As discussed in an article in the Australian Financial Review on 6 October 2009, similar cost-effective outcomes are expected as a result of Ratio's work for the City of Melbourne; in discussing Ratio's work the AFR article states: "Developers in Melbourne's apartment hotspots could soon be free to construct buildings with no car parking, under a radical plan before the City Council."

The industry is generally seeing a trend of lower car parking rates for residential development in areas with excellent access to public transport and activity centres. Areas such as the Forest Hill Precinct in South Yarra, St Kilda Road in Melbourne and St Kilda and other inner city locations have all in recent months have residential developments approved either by Council or VCAT with lower rates of parking provision.

Significantly, VCAT has recently approved some residential apartments without car parking in less urban areas, such as the Cities of Bayside and Glen Eira. Prior to this few, if any, dwellings in these areas had been approved without car parking. However, for these sites, with excellent access to public transport, shopping and community facilities, Ratio was able to successfully argue that on the basis of ABS car ownership data, the site location and the nature of the apartments, it was not necessary to provide car parking for all of the dwellings. This outcome would encourage greater use of sustainable transport modes.



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facts

The world's first skyscraper was the 10-storey Home Insurance office, built in Chicago in 1885. (During Roman times buildings were up to 8 storeys high.)

Alexander Graham Bell never phoned his wife or mother because they were deaf.

Orville Wright numbered the eggs that his chickens produced so he could eat them in the order they were laid.