



Diggers Rest Residents Association

**Diggers Rest Residents Assoc. Inc.**  
PO Box 106, Diggers Rest VIC 3427  
ABN: 13 860 996 706 Incorp: A0039717L

**President:** Bob Rau - Mob: 0427 024 620  
E-mail: [bobraul@bigpond.com](mailto:bobraul@bigpond.com)

Mr. Steve Dunn  
Director, Policy and Strategy  
Growth Areas Authority  
Level 6, 35 Spring Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000

Dear Mr. Dunn

Re: Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary Review to Support a City of 5 Million

We hereby present a submission on behalf of the Diggers Rest Residents Association (D.R.R.A.) in respect to the INVESTIGATION AREA, to the West and North of the Diggers Rest Township.

The township of Diggers Rest is located some 33kms from Melbourne's CBD, 8kms from Sunbury and 25kms North East from Melton. The origins of the township are often strenuously debated but general consensus is that it was a favorite 'watering hole' and stopover point for persons en-route to the Bendigo Goldfields. Apart from scattered houses, a railway station and hotel, it was essentially a small rural village until WW2 when a large army signals base was established (now long gone).

Resident development occurred somewhat artificially and haphazardly in the early 1950s. Evidence of this is demonstrated with the somewhat peculiar triangular shape of township layout north of the railway line. The original layout did not create a 'main' street of any note and paid little regard to its rural environment with respect to street layout, dimensions and structure.

The township is essentially domestic and urban in nature and can be justifiably described as dormitory in character, as a place of habitation through affordable housing. There are around 700 residential lots with a population in the order of 2000.

Diggers Rest is well serviced with all the essential utilities. The township is poor in terms of shopping facilities with the majority of persons either going to Sunbury or Watergardens for household goods. The township has good

transfer links sitting astride the Melbourne – Bendigo rail line, and with access to the Calder Freeway and major arterial roads to the West.

At every survey the D.R.R.A. has conducted investigating the concerns of local residents it is abundantly clear that they wish for -

- Some social centre
- A small but comprehensive shopping complex
- Medical centre / chemist
- More frequent public transport (bus and train)

The D.R.R.A. has conducted several public forums – in which guest speakers have spoken on the value of green wedge concept, town planning and township development and design, airport noise protection, landscape design and social development.

We further have conducted ‘open’ forums to ascertain the views of residents on –

- The population, residential form, character and location of an extended township.

At every forum the residents have recognized that they will inevitably have to compromise the existing tranquil nature of the town to acquire the critical population mass necessary to encourage the development of the services they desire.

Accordingly, they have acknowledged that the township will ultimately need obtain a population around 6000 – 7000 to attract certain businesses. Residents have also stated that development should be incremental, and sympathetic to the character of the existing township and certainly not dislocated from it. It is further recognized by deduction where such expansions could occur. The massive obstruction of the Calder Freeway precludes and development in the east.

The Melbourne Airports Environs Overlay constrains residential development south of Coimadai Road. Accordingly the only remaining directions for residential development is westerly and to the north. At first glance this would seem consistent with the ‘Investigation Area’, however, we are concerned as to the extent of this area.

It is our view that to permit residential development to this extent would surely result in three distinct and potentially dislocated communities – i.e. the existing township, those to the far west and those in the north. Rather than creating a reinvigorated homogenous township, there would likely be separate communal identities. We submit that the limits (i.e. U.G.B.) should constrain residential to distant of approximately 1000 metres west of Vineyard Road and 500 metres north of Davis Road.

Such an Urban Growth Boundary –

- Would allow for the growth of Diggers Rest to a population consistent with the Melton Council commissioned ASR “Assessment of Community Infrastructure Requirements” report of January 2005 i.e. to 3000
- Would be consistent with Melbourne 2030 and contain urban sprawl
- Would recognize the Airport Environs Overlay
- Would be consistent with advise provided by the Ministers Office

- Would recognize and preserve the value of the Green Wedge
- Would see the growth in Diggers Rest sufficient to provide necessary infrastructure and central Civic Centre
- To encourage good and sustainable urban design
- To recognize that the character of some towns in green wedges relies substantially on their limited size.

It is well recognized that fragmented, disconnected development of land without accompanying physical and social infrastructure will very likely lead to social, financial and environmental problems.

### Private Development

Over the past eight years there have been attempts by private and corporate developers for land zone change (C.23 and C.49 respectively) within the current Melton Shire Council's "Diggers Rest Structure Plan 1996" – to accommodate medium density residential subdivision. These applications have been for parcels of vacant land north of Houdini Drive and south of the Primary School. Inclusive however has also been a parcel of land, previously Defence Department land, adjacent and south of Coimadai Road. Respective Planning Ministers have consistently refused these applications because the land off Coimadai Road is under the flight path and accordingly subject to Melbourne's Airport Environs Overlay constraints. The DRRA supports the Minister's view.

### Green Wedges

The D.R.R.A. acknowledges and concurs with the concept of green wedges and desires the minimum invasion upon same. We note that the bulk of the land in the Investigation Area is Green Wedge Zone. For any expansion of the township to occur we recognize that there will have to be some invasion of same. However, we would wish it be at the limit we have suggested to accommodate up to 3000 households. Further we suggest that there be large buffer zones surrounding the entire built environment.

### Local Employment

The D.R.R.A. is conscious of the need to provide for local employment opportunities within the enlarged township precinct.

We contend that land north of Davis Road is sufficiently removed from the residential area and affords convenient access to the freeway. This area could accommodate some light mixed industry, provided the construction was environmentally and architecturally considerate. In addition employment opportunities would be provided in respective shops and associated offices. There is, however, overwhelming opposition to the creation of an industrial corridor as proposed by Melton Shire Council in its submission to Melbourne @ 5 Million. At a special council meeting held 16<sup>th</sup> February 2009 council resolved

- That the Investigation Area be extended to include the area generally between Hillside and Diggers Rest ( the Plumpton –Diggers Rest Corridor)

The intention is for the development of a huge industrial estate between the northern extent of Hillside to Diggers Rest. This is not only a violation of the Green Wedge but is opportunistically and speculatively predicated on –

- The likely location of the Outer Metropolitan Road
- The potential to service the employment precinct by rail
- Strong existing developer industry interest in the precinct
- The ability for residents of Sunbury, Diggers Rest and Melton’s Eastern corridor to access local jobs.

We contend it is the third dot point context, i.e. developer speculation and the opportunity aspect of a few local landholders which is driving this concept.

Our membership, and indeed the overwhelming response of townspeople who have responded very vociferously at meetings – (over 350 of whom have independently signed and forwarded letters of objection to the Minister re the issues of the UGB and industrial development) do not want the establishment of the proposed industrial precinct.

We thank you for the opportunity to present this submission.

Any enquiries please contact the undersigned.

Yours truly,

Robert Rau  
President  
Diggers Rest Residents Association

19<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Enclosures to be forwarded by mail.