

Inquiry into First Home Ownership
Productivity Commission
LB2, Collins Street East
Melbourne, Victoria 8003

Dear Sir,

IN CONFIDENCE

Firstly, I wish to thank your organization for this opportunity to contribute to your investigation in a serious way.

The reason for my request to keep my submission 'In Confidence' is that I have a very valuable property, suitable for a substantial development, where a Council and selected Group of Officers have behaved in a less than proper manner to prevent my property from being developed, even it had been recommended for approval.

My background has been in the Housing Industry. I have been for some 35 years involved, mainly as a principal in the land development/housing field in Sydney's outer suburbs. Both as a land developer and as a builder. Have also participated in joint ventures with other developers, financiers and builders since 1960. After the death of my partner of some 30 years I retired from the Industry, However, I still have an interest in a potential development, which I think has fallen victim to a

phenomenon that has emerged in the last 15 to 20 years in a number of Council areas to a more or lesser degree: It is a kind of sterilisation of perfectly suitable tracts of land and a quasi resumption without compensation taking place. This is being driven by to a large degree female planning staff and dedicated Council members with a kind of religious fervour. There is also a combination of old fashioned envy and a hefty dose of political manipulation at work, condoned by local members and General Managers alike and to my experience, without ethics, morals or other inhibition. I have ample documentation (available on demand) and in confidence to support those allegations. During very expensive consultations it has been confirmed to me by professional consultants/valuers and legal advisors, that this is quite widespread and unchecked in many areas. In other words, I am not particularly picked on or singled out.

The other element comes from the state-run 'Landcom', which has turned the original pretended purpose of giving us 'greedy developers' competition to drive prices down or at least stabilize them. In practice it has actually driven developers out of the business and created a state monopoly. This monopoly, specially under the labor regimes of recent times, has become much greedier than the greediest developers I have ever encountered, as well as the general deterioration of productive activity, planning and introduction of ever

increasing bureaucratic procedures, demands for costly 'reports' as well as outright deliberate manipulations to inflict unnecessary costs, delays ever changing rules and demands, mostly without notice to destroy viability of perfectly suitable projects.

This has produced distortions in the supply side of land which we are now witnessing. No real and objective planning principles have been applied in many, many cases. Either you have to go to the Land and Environment Court, give up, or just like in my case, wait for other times.

I have one particular project shelved, which is ideally located and suited, has in fact several years ago been recommended by a planning department for approval of nearly 100 dwellings. There are all infrastructure and facilities available - i.e. walking distance of a few hundred meters. (Shopping, schools, churches, railway station & buses) the land has had residential zoning for many years and had been partially developed. It is surrounded by existing houses with all services on site, suitable particularly for 'first homebuyers' but there is absolutely no hope under current attitudes and sabotage by a handful of people. Active sabotaging and boycotting activities including open slander during a Council meeting to organise against the development and manipulate zoning conditions. This happens without penalty, recourse or accountability. It does not help that the state seat is marginal, so that the state member just listens politely but

will not do anything to upset any chances of hanging onto a marginal seat. This is of course exploited by committed minor gangs that organise against anything.

An effective remedy could be, for the Council to be obliged to purchase such a property, at the highest and best usage plus loss of opportunity. (Subject to a strict time limit of not properly dealing with any such application.) Such a proposal had in fact been made at one time, but when the relevant act was changed, this was left out.

It is all too easy to sterilize property by flimsy and unsubstantiated pretexts and still collect rates and taxes. I also believe that this is unconstitutional. There is always a number of envy or politically driven groups with a bit of noise-making, that will paralyse Councils into inaction. It does need a severe financial penalty against the perpetrators and an arms-length institution with clout to promptly deal with such aberrations. Perhaps an alternative authority could be made available, if the local Council fails to proper, reasonably and promptly deal with such matters. I realise that inaction is the other alternative, which will build sufficient pressure in due time by sheer demand to resort to common sense and review the distortions and free such viable projects. This is becoming evident at present.

Projections show that the population is to again double in a few decades. No responsible body exists to deal with this.

In the event there is an opportunity to discuss my particular situation I would welcome such an opportunity.

My above mentioned project could be made a model development for energy self-sufficiency, on-site water management, high content of solar energy usage and built in WiFi for 'Teleworkers' and most of all for first home buyers at an affordable cost in a wonderful natural location.

Wishing your organization the best of luck with your brief, I await very keenly any progress with undertakings to kerb the miscreants activities.

Yours faithfully,
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