

NEWS RELEASE



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STATE GOVERNMENT AGREES TO COUNCIL DEMANDS ON FORESHORE WORKING PARTY

Late yesterday, on his way to the airport, the Minister for Planning and Local Government Mr Robert Maclellan, agreed to conditions demanded by Port Phillip Council for its involvement in a joint working party over the controversial plan for high-rise development in Port Melbourne and St Kilda.

The plan, entitled *Gateway to the Bay*, was released on Monday and has already aroused stiff opposition from resident action groups, Save Our Suburbs, the National Trust and the Opposition.

Port Phillip Mayor, Dick Gross, said tonight that the council had grave reservations about the plan but had agreed to participate in a joint working party subject to a range of a conditions.

“The council has been successful in convincing the Minister for Planning and Local Government to extend the period of public comment by one month to 30 April to allow time for proper community consultation. Copies of the plan aren’t available for love nor money, as Becton Corporation, the National Trust, SOS, local resident action groups and numerous other organisations and individuals have discovered over the last couple of days.

“It’s quite clear that the State Government does not take community consultation seriously. We do. We intend to properly display the document in our town halls and libraries, notify all residents about it, hold public meetings and provide every opportunity for people to make known their views on Mr Maclellan’s high-rise vision for the foreshore. Of course, the ratepayers will pay for this consultation, not the State Government,” he said.

Cr Gross said that the State Government had also agreed that *Gateway to the Bay* was genuinely open for public discussion.

“There is no way that we would participate in this process if there was not a real opportunity for the council and the community at large to have an impact on the outcome. The State Government has agreed that an Advisory Committee, appointed by Mr Maclellan, will accept a submission from the council and that the council will also will consider the committee’s report before it goes to the Minister,” he said.

Cr Gross said that the council was determined to defend its own planning scheme which outlines where development is appropriate and where it is not.

“What has dismayed councillors most is that the City of Port Phillip is widely recognised as a leader in the planning reform process, established by Mr Maclellan, but he has changed the rules at the eleventh hour. Under rules imposed by the State Government on councils, Port Phillip Council has spent three years of hard work engaged in consulting the community and undertaking heritage, urban character, height and other studies to rewrite our planning scheme and associated heritage and urban character classifications. Even Hamish MacDonald from Becton Corporation has said publicly that the City of Port Phillip is good to work with.

“If a thorough planning process is good enough for councils, why isn’t it good enough for the Minister? We don’t want all this strategic planning work, which has strong community support, thrown way on a whim. Mr Maclellan’s ‘bigger is better’ approach for Port Melbourne and St Kilda needs public scrutiny,” he said.

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