

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

INTERIM REPORT ON HOUSING SUPPLY REGULATION

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I respond to the Productivity Commission's **Interim Report on Housing Supply Regulation** and question the methodology used to reach conclusions about local heritage controls, or but in this exceptional case where there is a lack of them.

Specifically, I address the matter of its reliance on questionable evidence, but specifically in relation to Kilmore, well documented as Victoria's oldest inland town, but with inchoate heritage protection.

The Kilmore area was first settled by squatters in 1837. The Kilmore township comprises two distinct parts: the Old Township of Kilmore which was created by private survey in 1841; and the New Township of Kilmore which was created by Government survey in 1850. The latter abuts the Old Township to its south.

Being on the Sydney to Melbourne route, a day's horseride from Melbourne, and with a permanent water supply, a service township developed which became the largest highway town between Melbourne and Sydney by 1854. The township serviced the surrounding satellite communities consisting of the pastoral runs and the farming settlement of Willowmavin, which rapidly grew from 1841.

In addition to traveller accommodation and provisioning shops, a service industry of coach operators, carriers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, saddlers, and feed merchants became established. Early industries included brickmaking, flourmilling, tanning, brewing, printing and quarrying.

In 1856 Kilmore was created the first seat of Municipal Government in Victoria. Subsequently three Road Boards surrounded it and these were all amalgamated in 1873 to form the Shire of Kilmore.

By 1865 Kilmore had: six Churches; a Court House; a Gaol; a Hospital; a Mechanics' Institute; a Police Superintendent's residence; a Post and Telegraph Office; and several Schools, many built from locally quarried bluestone.

Progressively from 1850, within the eastern boundary of the township, a series of contiguous Crown Reserves was aggregated which today total some 125 hectares. These include: a {p;ice Racecourse and Recreation; Cricket; Rifle Range; Golf Course; Park and Gardens; Botanic Gardens; and Police Paddock. These Reserves have had many and varied uses down through the years and it is contended, that in its totality and survival, this is one of the most significant cultural heritage landscapes in the State.

Given the above, it is not surprising that Kilmore was one of the first country towns in Australia to have a Heritage Study commissioned in 1982, which was funded by the Commonwealth Government. The *Kilmore Heritage Study* (1982) identified: some 120 buildings; 6 Precincts; and 11 Notable Areas and Features.

In spite of that study being adopted by Council in 1982, since then a quarter of the buildings have been demolished, around fifty have been identified by Heritage Overlay, with the remaining forty identified for a Gap Study in 2006, alas still remaining to be done. The Precincts, even if covered by Heritage Overlay, have been largely ignored in regards to development. The Notable Areas and Features have similarly been disregarded.

The inherent problem is that the Shire of Kilmore, and since 1994, the Shire of Mitchell, has had a large number of itinerating planners, more than (50) fifty in number. Similarly scores of Councillors have served and the majority have never lived in or have little or no knowledge of Kilmore, let alone its illustrious history. In the most recent Council elections, seven of the nine sitting councillors did not seek re-election.

Mitchell Shire has no Cultural Heritage Strategy for Kilmore, nor does it appear to have any specific Economic Strategies for Kilmore. Nor has Mitchell Shire employed a regular Heritage Advisor until recently. Whilst the Hume Freeway, bypassed Kilmore in 1976, it still has the Northern Highway currently passing through, but this is also the subject to future scheduled bypass.

Whilst planners argue that the majority of Kilmore is not covered by a Heritage Overlay, the fact remains that Kilmore is Victoria's oldest inland town and accordingly is of State and National significance. Even though Kilmore has been forgotten/ignored by bureaucracy, as to comprehensive planning Heritage Overlays, Kilmore's unique historic State and National significance demands that neighbourhood character be respected in all future planning and development considerations.

A recent example is the proposed dense residential development in the existing Equestrian Precinct which abuts the Racecourse. The Kilmore racecourse hosts the daily training of scores of horses and some fifty race meetings a year, with half of these meetings at night. The Kilmore racing industry is a major economic driver for the region, employing many ancillary staff and engaging: transport operators; farriers; veterinarians; saddlers; feed merchants; hospitality operators; and part-time race event staff.

Heritage protection through the planning systems is important for nurturing community identity, history and tradition. It fosters a sense of place and continuity across generations and offers educational, cultural, economic and environmental benefits by safeguarding special places and stories for future appreciation.

These are places that are worth keeping because they enrich our lives - by helping us to understand the past, by contributing to the richness of the present environment and we expect them to be of value to future generations. (The Burra Charter).

Kilmore by its primacy in the history of the State of Victoria and its rich and varied cultural heritage is one such place worth preserving for future generations. Every past building, structure or even vacant block, no matter how humble, has its own story to tell and contributes to the sum total of Victoria's oldest inland town, Kilmore.

The new Victorian Government's *Introducing the Victorian Local Heritage Guidelines*, legislated in May of this year, provides a fresh opportunity to review the historical,

heritage, and economic significance of Kilmore's neighbourhood character, in the context of a town, a region, the State and the Nation.