

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make the following submission:

1. I am a resident of Williamstown and together with other residents we made a number of submissions at VCAT in opposition of the former Port Phillip Woollen Mills site in Williamstown.
2. I have witnessed first hand what seemed to be a bias or preference to find in favour of developers. From having Local Council and community submissions given less weight (or disallowed when requested by developers - with no challenge by members) than those made by developers, even though at times the information being presented was not always factual.
3. Regardless of the many resident and council submissions and witnesses, VCAT made very few concessions to the needs of the Williamstown community. In fact I can only think of one time when Member Code made a decision in favour of the community, only to have the developer appeal and overturn the decision.
4. I strongly urge the Committee to conduct a major review of VCAT's Planning and Environment hearings and appeal processes and find that community objections should be taken into consideration and (fairly) be reflected in findings.
5. Even though VCAT hearings are based on a court-like model, the fairness afforded in courts does not appear to be in evidence when one is up against a developer with money for QCs and SCs.
6. I would also urge a review of conflicts of interest, for example members or recent members of VCAT should be excluded from representing client developers for a reasonable period, just as ex politicians need to be excluded from lobbying.

I am about to travel overseas so am unable to appear.

Regards

Suzanne Orange