

## ***Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association***

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### **Submission to Upper House Parliamentary Environment & Planning Committee regarding Planning & Environment Amendment (negotiating Objectors) Bill 2015.**

It is clear that over time the VCAT process has deteriorated considerably and the basic principles of providing equal access to community for resolution of disputes have been eroded. Since charges for appealing at VCAT have been greatly increased, the volume of applications has inevitably decreased and financially powerful vested interests have an opposition free run.

The growing trend of ignoring the weight of opinion presented by objectors has further reduced the integrity of the VCAT process in the opinion of the affected community. Therefore change is urgently required.

Due to changes in planning process at local council level, availability of information and opportunity for community consultation to have a say in what is planned for their neighbourhood has been reduced to an unacceptable level, and the means of dispute is often very limited. Objectors must have the right to be heard.

While there is merit in the proposed amendment in recognising the need to consider the weight of objectors, however the wording is rather vague and we are concerned to ensure that it will be totally effective in restoring the balance that is necessary for a democratic and equitable VCAT hearing process and maximum public transparency.

At all times it must be kept in mind that government funding for VCAT administration is based on revenue collected from Victorian taxpayers.

Gloria O'Connor  
President, Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc.

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