



How to ruin a nice suburb.

## BRONTE LOCALS AREN'T BACKING DOWN

Words *Sarah Healey* Picture *Winston Langley Burlington*

**T**rying to placate a pool of ill-tempered piranhas would've proved a much simpler task than calming the torrent of locals who surged through the doors of the old Bronte RSL to attend a 'community workshop' last month, which intended to discuss the vision for the Macpherson Street precinct. Instead, it descended into utter chaos, with over three hundred people fronting up to find out what could potentially be erected on the RSL site.

Waverley Council was ill prepared for the turnout, with almost three times more locals present than anticipated. The lack of seating combined with a non-existent PA system further infuriated those in attendance, with architectural Council Consultant Russell Olsen eventually abandoning the stage after statements like "we're envisioning a walkable centre with a reduction of traffic in the area" and "we intend to upgrade and activate Chesterfield Lane" caused uproar throughout the

crowd. Clearly those in attendance weren't buying these testimonials.

What is undeniably obvious is this: there's an astonishing amount of opposition to the development currently being proposed by developers Winston Langley Burlington (WLB).

According to 'Save Bronte Village' co-founder Keri Spooner, "What has become very clear over the past few weeks is that the local community does not want a Harris Farm or any other large store with their associated trucks. The developer has told us that there will be 30,000 people from surrounding areas shopping here. This is ridiculous!"

A week after Council's community workshop, WLB developer David Hynes held a 'community information session' to present their design concepts, which did little to alleviate locals' concerns. If anything, the poster presentations (which can be viewed at [www.bronterslproject.com.au](http://www.bronterslproject.com.au)) outraged people further, many defacing them with their 'rebuttals'.

Apart from obvious concerns with traffic congestion and the height of the building, people were outraged by the excessive retail opening hours (7am-9pm, seven days a week), with one local declaring, "They are creating a need when there wasn't one in the first place!"

However, Hynes firmly believes the community would be better off under his conceptual designs.

"I just urge people to consider what we're proposing in the context of the current planning controls and to compare the outcomes if I was to do something according to the current controls. We've really worked hard to come up with better outcomes for our immediate neighbours than would be the case if we were to lodge something in compliance with the current planning controls," Hynes said.

It seems a number residents have no confidence in the developer accurately listening and responding to people's concerns, and, as such, members of Save Bronte Village held a meeting to listen to independent experts identify a range of implications this development will have on the community.

What shocked those in attendance was the fact that the developer's proposed height is about 9.9m over the height limit, traffic numbers are drastically understated, and more trucks will likely be servicing the centre than anticipated. Independent experts agreed that they suspect this development is going to have a bigger impact than what's being presented to the community.

At this stage, Council is collating the community feedback and data for review.

According to Waverley Mayor Sally Betts, "If, following the review, Council resolves that the existing planning controls need to be revised, then updated draft planning controls will be placed on public exhibition for community comment."