

## ***An International Conference to explore approaches to the preservation of urban built heritage, with a focus on Melbourne***

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Mary Drost

### **An intervention: reflections on the changing character of Melbourne**

Speaking as the Convenor of Planning Backlash Inc, a coalition of over 250 resident groups across city, coast and country, I spoke on behalf of the growing number of residents who are angry about the constant loss of urban heritage being forced on us.

If Melbourne had been kept as it was when called Marvellous Melbourne, it would have been the greatest Victorian city in the world and a great tourist attraction. Instead it is becoming nothing but ugly, poorly-built glass and concrete towers, as one by one heritage buildings are bulldozed. This approach to heritage differs to the protections afforded such historic structures in Europe. As many of towers are pre-sold in Asia, they are not even for Australians. Furthermore, there is an oversupply and many will be half empty.

The proposed redevelopment of the Windsor Hotel represents a disastrous decision by Heritage Victoria and the then Planning Minister, Justin Madden, as well as Dimmeys in Richmond.

Similar destruction of heritage is occurring in the suburbs. As a result, the wonderful Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war suburbs are being damaged by high-rise high density and wall-to-wall McMansions with no gardens or trees. This destruction appears to have been assisted by a weak, development-minded Heritage Victoria and a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal that seems to assist developers. People everywhere are angry. Despite these issues, there is a certain amount of improvement in some areas where the New Residential Zones have been brought in, bringing height protection in the most sought after zones. Ultimately, this excessive development will continue unless population growth is tempered, indicating a need for far more considered policy encompassing housing, transport and population.