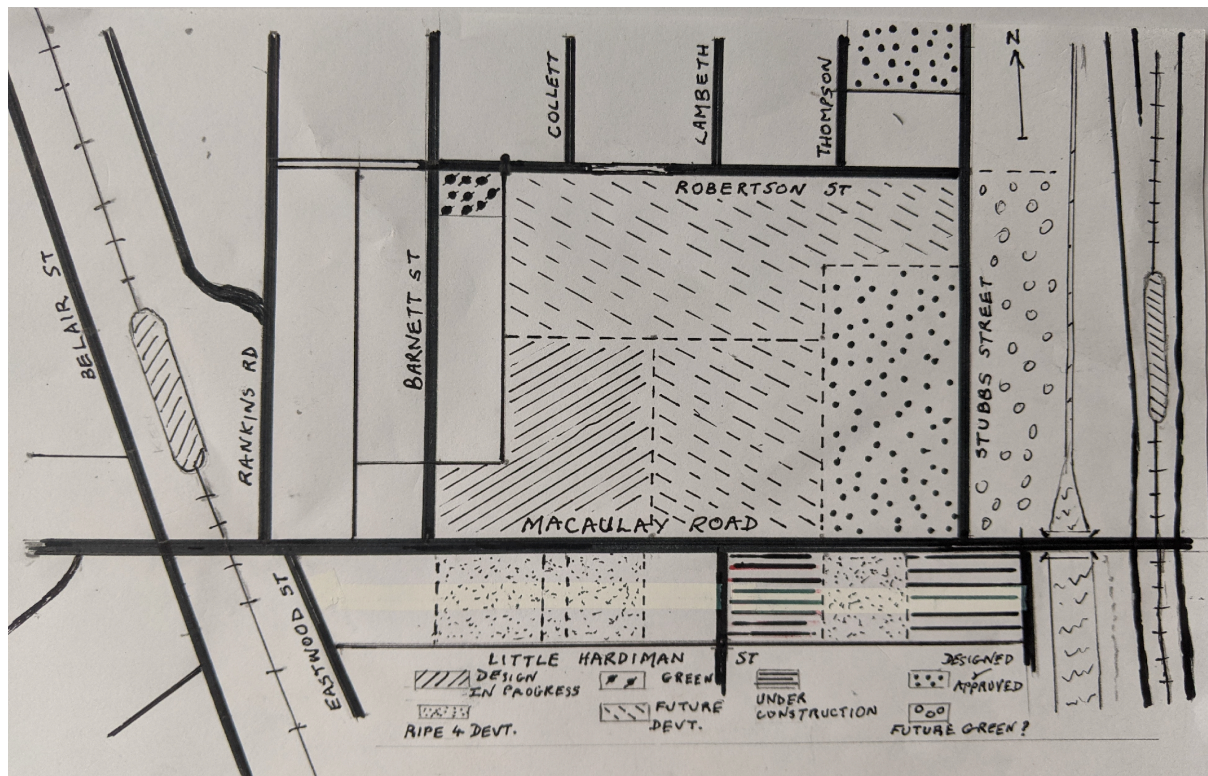


Macaulay Road - A Unique Dilemma

When I became Chair of the Kensington Association I was bequeathed a wonderful psycho-geographic contemplation, 'Blue Lake', by historian David Sornig. The story examines the evolution of 'The West Melbourne Swamp'; Sornig's writing encourages readers to look harder at the places they live in. I've been thinking harder about the network of roads surrounding the western section of Macaulay Road.

Macaulay Road is a significant inner suburban connector road crossing two railway lines, which are less than 500 metres apart with both crossings (according to engineers) not able to be bridged-over or burrowed-under. There is no other road in Melbourne that is similarly significant and constrained! Fed by Kensington and Epsom Roads, it runs through Kensington village, and over the two railway lines - a stretch that predictably experiences gridlock during peak hours. As well as presenting a dilemma to city bound commuters choosing their best route, there's a more severe dilemma faced by government planners and regulators into the future! Both sides of Macaulay Road between the two railway crossings are ripe for development. A map below paints the picture.



With a development wave at our doorstep, the soul of our suburb is at stake. Will Kensington, in particular this Macaulay Road precinct, become a soulless dormitory suburb with congestion and 8 storey apartment blocks as its most salient features? With present development on the south side, together with the certain future development of other sites north of Macaulay Rd (AWTA, Webb building, Cityside Industrial Estate and more), the planning dilemma is painfully obvious. Even with residential development limited to current building permits, the population projections in the Macaulay Structural Plan are grossly underestimated. Because of the large land-holdings on both sides of this part of Macaulay

Rd, the State government (as opposed to local government) is in the driver's seat and will be the final arbiter as to what development takes place.

It seems that State planning procedures and protocols are woefully inadequate to cope with this kind of planning conundrum. What usually gets built only has to comply with a relatively loose set of planning controls, which means that a uniquely constrained roadway like Macaulay Road, without foresight and intervention from the State government, faces intolerable traffic congestion. As it is at present the large land holders individually, in their own time, make uncoordinated decisions about the development of their sites to maximise return for investors. Procedures don't allow for a precinct wide plan to maximise benefits for the community.

What will transpire to prompt the government to stop what was in the misty past a 'West Melbourne Swamp' from becoming what has been called the 'Macaulay Canyons', where both soul and sunlight are lost in the shadow of buildings?