



Do You Want Fries With That?

"One with the lot" is an expression generally associated with placing an order at McDonalds, which is then invariably met with the response I've used as the title of this article. But the "one with the lot" I'm referring to is a recent job I have just completed in Kangaroo Ground that involved so many aspects of the work we do as surveyors that it reminded me of how fortunate we are to be involved in a profession that offers such a wide variety of activities.

The property was a large one, 176 hectares of very undulating land ranging in height from RL70 to RL195. My involvement commenced only after the planning permit application had already been lodged, based on a plan prepared by Terrain Consulting Group. An appeal had been lodged with VCAT against the Council's failure to make a determination and I was engaged to give evidence on the planning issues at the hearing of the appeal.

These were wide-ranging as the land was in a Green Wedge Zone and its development was considered to be very sensitive by local protection groups and by more than twenty nearby objectors. The Council also belatedly resolved that, if an appeal had not been lodged, the permit would have been refused and numerous grounds of refusal were cited.

The match-winning issue turned out to be the dreaded "Net Gain" requirements of the document titled Victoria's Native Vegetation Management: A Framework for Action, now incorporated into all Planning Schemes. For the first time in my experience, it was easy to comply in this case and, thanks to the excellent work of **Lincoln Kern** of Practical Ecology, we were able to demonstrate that the development of the property would result in an improvement to its conservation values and the Net Gain Analysis showed a healthy balance of positive credits.

So the appeal was won, with the only loss being a reduction from 20 lots of not less than 8 hectares to 19 lots, and the task of carrying out the subdivision itself was offered to me. Of course, before accepting, I checked with **Andrew Smith** of Terrain and was assured that all accounts had been settled. He was naturally disappointed at not being retained but was philosophical about it and graciously wished me well in a very professional manner.

Richard Stanaway, probably known to many of you as the author of Quickclose, was interested in becoming involved in "a bit of fieldwork" at this time and I engaged him to use his expertise with GPS to establish about 80

control points over the whole of the property, which formed a superb basis for the entire survey and made the marking out of the allotment boundaries and numerous line pegs a relatively simple task once the complex surround had been fixed.

Some of the other ingredients in the "one with the lot" included: the formal closure of a Government Road that ran through the property; fixing the boundaries of two Crown Reserves adjacent to watercourses; amending the alignment of a Government Road still in use; fixing the very irregular boundaries of the disused Maroondah Aqueduct, part of which was in a tunnel; determining the most appropriate location for a Recreational Trail (principally equestrian) of more than 4 kilometres in length; justifying an increase over title distance of more than four metres in a single line; creating a carriageway easement over an adjoining property to improve access; and dealing with Council's unreasonably high standards for road construction requirements in this semi-rural area which have very nearly caused the objectors' worst nightmares to become a reality.

It is now more than fifty years since I commenced my career in Surveying, and 48 since I was licensed. It is quite amazing that, after all that time and in the twilight of my life, I can still be finding challenges and enjoying the task of solving them. As I said at the outset, we're privileged to work in a field where this can happen and, further, where there is such a strong sense of community that a program like Victorian Bushfires Surveying Taskforce is enthusiastically embraced by virtually every firm in town.

I also believe we should be endeavouring to claw back at least some of the work we inexplicably allow to be taken from us by Town Planning Consultants. Fifty years ago, they didn't even exist and all of the planning work they now command was done by Surveyors. As I mentioned, the reason I was appointed to this quite substantial job in Kangaroo Ground was because of my ability to carry out a planning task associated with it. I have no specific planning qualifications, other than my surveyor's license and my experience, but that doesn't prevent me from performing these tasks.

Nor should it prevent you. So the next time a client talks to you about another job that looks like it may be "One with the lot", perhaps you should ask him "Do you want planning with that?"

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