

LAND SUBDIVISIONS.

The planning of sites for houses is a matter that has received insufficient attention in the past. The *Local Government Act 1915* incorporates provisions which require the submission of plans of subdivision of land to local authorities for their approval and seal. The Act stipulates that plans shall show necessary particulars and levels and that the council shall refer the plans, &c., to their engineer or surveyor for report, collect fees, and pay them to the surveyor for services performed.

The Act also provides that the council *shall* not cause the plan to be sealed if it is not satisfied that the lands and streets can be sufficiently drained, and further, having regard to the scheme of subdivision, the council *may* refuse to seal the plan if in its opinion—

- (a) any such new street road lane or passage will not be connected at each end with another street road lane or passage or the several corners at the junction or intersection of any such streets roads lanes and passages will not be sufficiently rounded off to facilitate the traffic where in the opinion of the council such rounding off is necessary ;
- (b) there is any reserve or any allotment on such land abutting on or continuous with or along any portion of the length of any street road lane or passage whatsoever ;
or
- (c) the intended position direction or termination of any such new street road lane or passage ought to be varied for the purpose of securing easier more direct or more convenient means of communication with any other street road lane or passage ;
or
- (d) the allotments into which such land is to be subdivided (or any of them) will be subject to inundation by floods and are not marked distinctly on such plan as being subject to inundation ; or
- (e) for any sufficient reason so be stated by them in writing it is not in the public interest that the plan should be sealed.

The Local Government Act at present requires only those plans of subdivision to be referred to the council for its approval which include a new street or which contain allotments which will not have any means of drainage from the side or rear by means of a lane or passage, as well as a frontage to an existing street. Many subdivisions are made of lands fronting existing roads or streets, or portion of allotments are transferred, which do not receive the consent of the council. It frequently happens in such cases that no easements are provided which will enable the drainage from the transferred portion to be carried over the remainder of the allotment or vice versa. This results in bad sanitation, disputes, and unnecessary cost. The Commission considers that the Local Government Act should be amended so as to provide for the submission to the councils of *all* subdivisions of lands irrespective of whether a new street is included or not.

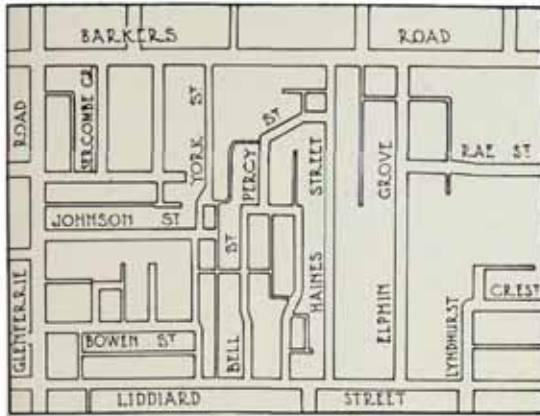
In the past the operation of the clauses of the Act which deal with the subdivision of land has been most unsatisfactory. Many cases can be cited where the surveyor or the engineer on whom the council relies for guidance in these matters was the surveyor who subdivided the land. Under the provisions of the Act, therefore, he is required to report upon his own subdivision.

It must be remembered that the greater part of the metropolitan street system as it exists is a result of the piecing together of innumerable independent subdivisions. The result of this is that the size, orientation, and drainage facilities of many allotments and the width, direction, and number of streets, are not such as would be contained in a modern well designed plan of the whole metropolis. Since the manner in which lands are subdivided determines the layout of the city on which huge sums are ultimately expended, it is of pressing importance that adequate supervision and control should be maintained.

The lack of satisfactory control of land subdivision in the past is evidenced by the present inadequacy of our street system in parts of the metropolis, entailing costly corrective measures such as the widening of old and the cutting of new streets, and the unnecessary amount of street space which is set apart in areas such as East Melbourne, Middle Park, and Essendon, involving high costs of road construction and maintenance.

In the chapters of this Report dealing with Communications and Urgent Works, is a statement of the minimum road and street requirements of this City. **It is anomalous that while corrective measures are advocated which will cost large sums of money, no systematic effort is being made to prevent the commission of similar errors in the newer and outer suburban areas.**

It is considered that the maintenance of adequate control and supervision over the subdivision of land is necessary to prevent or reduce to a minimum the expenditure which will otherwise be incurred.



Unco-ordinated streets, Hawthorn.

for many living in the area, and lesser property values in areas where these conditions exist. Many examples can be given where the length of streets is much in excess of that required to give access to the allotments included in the subdivision. In one small subdivision embracing only 10 acres of land which was recently submitted by a municipality, the Commission was able to reduce the length of streets by 650 feet. Such replanning not only lessens the amount that must be paid for future street construction, but also lessens the costs of other services such as water, sewerage, lighting, &c., which, though small individually, aggregate a considerable sum.

This Report includes plans of general development for Melbourne, and outlines the system of communications which it is considered is necessary for the proper circulation of traffic, a scheme of zoning, and a recreational system. These plans are sufficiently detailed to enable an immediate start to be made to regulate and control development on the lines laid down, and to ensure that the layout of new areas is in accordance therewith. **It is considered that the Town Planning Authority which it is recommended should be created to administer a Town Planning Act as outlined in Part X., should be entrusted with the control and supervision of plans of subdivision.** This legislation would ensure that all plans of subdivision before being sealed by the municipality would be approved by the Town Planning Board or Town Planner. The Town Planning Authority should have power to refuse approval of a plan for any of the reasons included in the Local Government Act or if—

- (i) it conflicts with an approved town planning scheme for the area, or is so designed as to render impracticable or unnecessarily delay the accomplishment of any portion of the scheme.
- (ii) any road or street is less than 50 feet wide ;
- (iii) the land therein comprised is intersected or bounded or partly bounded by a railway line, and there is no provision made for a road, street, or public reserve on the side or sides of the railway line adjacent to such land ;
- (iv) the site, or orientation of any building which could be erected on such land, would be undesirable.
- (v) provision is not made for the dedication of a road or reserve on the side or sides of any existing river, creek, watercourse, or foreshore which is adjacent to or passes through any land included in the plan of subdivision ;
- (vi) provision is not made for any drainage reserves or drainage easements which may be necessary to enable the allotments or parcels of land and any new roads, streets, or rights-of-way to be sufficiently drained into a public drain, existing road, street, or stream into which the drainage from such land may lawfully be discharged, or if any of the land included in the subdivision is subject to inundation.

In the future the subdivision of land should be carried out in accordance with a plan of general metropolitan development, prepared after due study and consideration of all the factors influencing the city's growth.

The uneconomical and unsatisfactory layout of many sections of the metropolis, wholly or partly due to the lack of adequate supervision in the past, can best be illustrated by the reproduction of small sections of the street system which appear on this page.

The disjointed streets and the numerous cul-de-sac and lanes shown on the previous page are a product of the piecemeal development of lands. They are an economic burden by reason of unnecessary street construction, unnecessary travel



Unco-ordinated streets, Camberwell.

- (vii) provision is not made for any easement required by any public authority for a public utility such as water, sewerage, gas, electricity, &c. ;
- (viii) the grade of any street is unnecessarily or undesirably steep ;
- (ix) the length of new street is in excess of that necessary to permit of an economical subdivision of land ;
- (x) any street is not connected at each end with a street not less than 50 feet wide, or any right-of-way does not at each end join a street not less than 50 feet wide.
- (xi) any section is more than 600 feet in length without a cross street.
- (xii) the streets cannot be economically continued through adjoining areas ;
- (xiii) the position, direction, or alignment of any street should be varied to give more direct or convenient connexion with other adjoining streets.
- (xiv) the intersections of any streets are not so treated that the traffic in the centre of one street shall have at least a clear view of the traffic in all streets at least 60 feet before reaching the intersection of the centre lines of any streets.

During the past seven years, 4,617 plans of subdivision have been lodged in the Office of Titles for registration, representing an average of 660 per annum, which, under the legislation proposed, would be examined by the Town Planning Authority. The Commission suggests that the examination of these plans should be carried out at the cost of the subdivider in accordance with charges which could be framed under regulations made under the Town Planning Act. It is considered that approximately £1,500 per annum could be collected in this manner, and be credited to the costs of the administration of the Town Planning Department.

DARLING TO GLEN WAVERLEY AREA.

An illustration of the advantages to be gained from the procedure recommended is presented by the recent subdivisional development in the vicinity of the new Darling to Glen Waverley Railway in the Shire of Mulgrave. The Minister of Railways requested this Commission to report on the future development of the area which would be served by this Railway, and a special report was issued in 1927. The report, which was presented to the Government and the municipalities, outlined a scheme of development, and was accompanied by plans and details of the legislation required.

Although no subsequent action was taken by the Government, the Municipality of Mulgrave adopted the Commission's scheme of development. It has since assiduously applied the meagre provisions of the Local Government Act to its approval of plans of subdivision, with the result that this area has been safeguarded from the undesirable conditions which must follow the unco-ordinated and wrongly-directed subdivision of land. This municipality forwarded all plans of subdivision within the region of the scheme of this Commission for report, with the result that many plans which did not conform to the scheme were completely remodelled to agree with it, and were also co-ordinated with neighbouring subdivisions.

As a result of this supervision by a town planning authority, and the existence of a definite plan of development for the area, $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles of main street, most of which are not less than 84 feet wide, have been set aside for the future traffic needs of this area. In addition, 30 acres of park lands have been allocated free of cost to the ratepayers of this Shire. In this area 34 separate subdivisional plans have been submitted of 670 acres of land, all of which are in accordance with the major proposals made by the Commission. These results have been accomplished by co-operation between the Commission, the Municipality, and subdividers under the inadequate provisions of the Local Government Acts, and are a cause for much satisfaction, but voluntary co-operation in matters of land subdivision is very difficult to bring about.

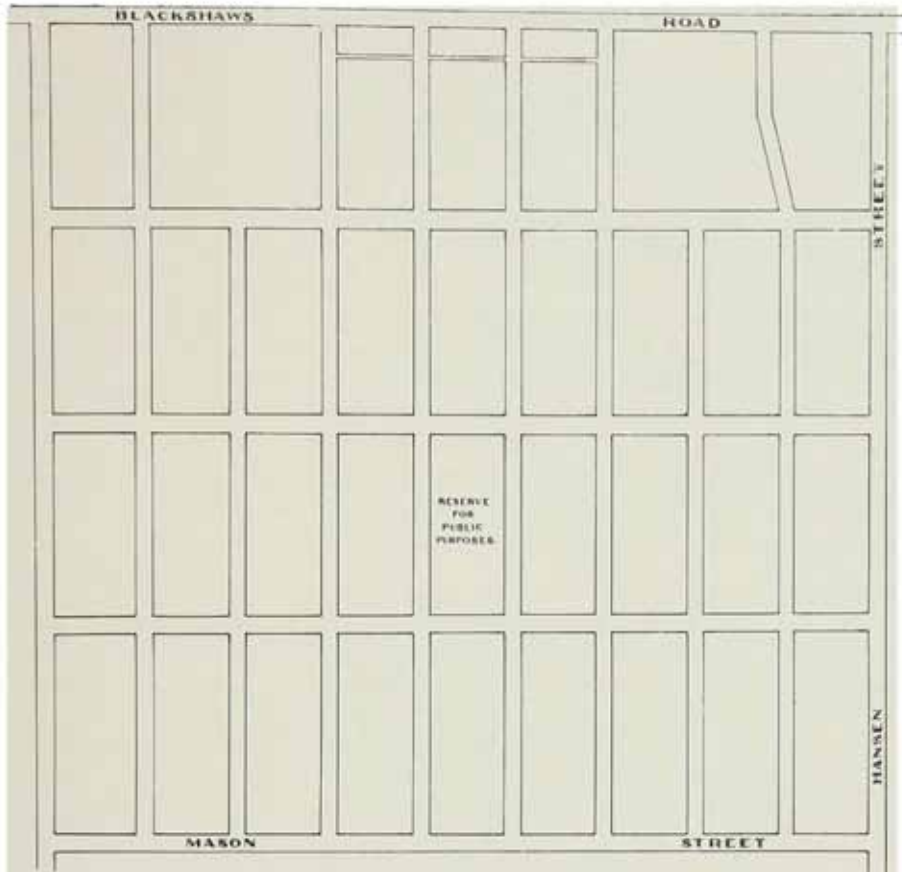
Legislation, such as is suggested, is urgently necessary in the interests of proper development, especially in the outer suburban areas.

The extension of the system of control and compulsory reference of plans of subdivision to a central Town Planning Authority, will result in a wider application to all parts of the metropolitan area of the orderly development now being obtained in Mulgrave, and will avoid unnecessary expenditure on street widenings and reconstructional schemes in the future.

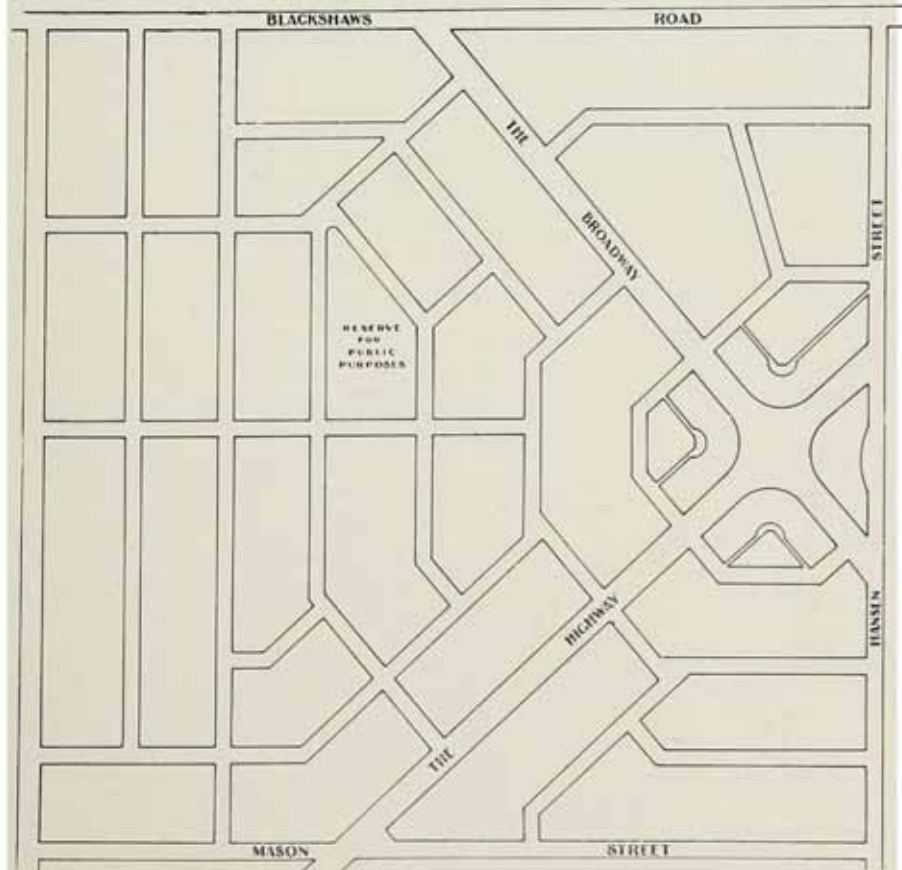
SUBDIVISIONS IN OTHER AREAS.

Many subdividers and owners of land in the past have viewed with suspicion the efforts to induce them to adopt town planning principles. In some instances subdivisions which are intended to be town planning layouts are fantastic, and do not comply with requirements from a general

REMODELLED SUBDIVISIONS.



Scheme "A"—The original layout as approved by the Council.



Scheme "B"—The layout as amended to include main roads.

development standpoint; in other cases they are extremely wasteful, and not in the interests of the city, the future residents, or the owners. These "so called" town planning schemes have retarded the general adoption by many owners of more scientific subdivision of land.

The readiness of some subdividers to adopt improved methods is evidenced by the success which has been obtained in the Glen Waverley area, showing that they are not adverse from a reasonable scheme of subdivision when definite proposals on a broad scale are placed before them. In many instances this Commission has been able to show owners how their subdivisions could be considerably improved by altering street directions, providing open space for recreation, and reducing the total length of roads, whilst making provision for an equal number of building allotments to those shown on the original plans.

Plans of subdivisions in the municipalities of Blackburn and Mitcham, Box Hill, Brighton, Broadmeadows, Brunswick, Camberwell, Doncaster and Templestowe, Hawthorn, Malvern, Northcote, Oakleigh, Port Melbourne, Prahran, Preston, and Werribee have been referred to this Commission for advice from time to time, and the results of negotiations with municipalities, owners and subdividers, have been particularly encouraging. As a consequence of this procedure considerable lengths of wide streets, and areas of parks and playgrounds, have been obtained which have considerably benefited the subdivisions concerned. Resumptions, street widenings, &c., in these areas, should, therefore, be unnecessary in the future.

As examples of the above, the plans on page 261 are submitted. Scheme "A" shows the layout which was surveyed and forwarded to the Council for approval and seal in accordance with the usual practice, and the sealing was duly authorized. Prior to the subdivision of this area, the Commission had given considerable attention to the problem of road transportation in the western suburbs, and had adopted a general scheme of thoroughfares. This scheme was not known to the subdividers nor to the Council at the time this particular subdivision of the area was approved by the Council. As the approved subdivision seriously affected the Commission's scheme, the subdividers were approached, and, although they had incurred the considerable costs of subdivision and had received the approval of the Council as required by existing law, so satisfied were they with the proposal that they agreed to replan the area in accordance with the Commission's general scheme.

Scheme "B" shows the amended subdivision, including two main roads, "The Highway" and "Broadway," each 84 feet in width. The general design of the subdivision is a marked advance on the old checker-board layout which was previously intended, and is an excellent example of the benefits to be gained by adequate control.

It should not, however, be necessary to amend plans on which large sums have been spent, and usually subdividers are loth to change their plans when expense has been entailed. Those who do are to be commended for their interest in the development of the metropolis on sound lines, and they are realizing that it pays them to do so.

THE BRIGHTON TOWN PLANNING SCHEME.

In 1925, the Brighton City Council decided to take steps to regulate the development of a large area of land in the East Ward of its City, so as to prevent an extension of the undesirable conditions which were being created by the separate subdivisions of small areas of land in the neighbourhood. The sketch inset shows an example of the layout which was resulting from practices previously employed. The Council invited competitive designs for a Town Planning Scheme for the whole of the undeveloped area as shown on the plan, Sheet No. 12. This area also included some lands which had been subdivided and the plans approved by the Council.



Undesirable Layout as developing in vicinity of Brighton Town Planning Scheme.

The Surveyor to this Commission submitted a design in the competition and the Commission was greatly pleased to learn that his design was selected by the assessors. The design was approved by the Council and subsequently forwarded to the Commission, whose approval was given, and the Council was congratulated on its enterprise and its efforts to guide the future development of its municipality. The winning design has been outlined on the plan, Sheet No. 12, which shows how well the internal arrangement of this

area, which was limited in scope by certain existing subdivisions, has dovetailed with the surrounding areas. In addition, provision has been made for main roads, reserves, business centres, &c., in satisfactory locations.

As stated on page 201 the Council and this Commission waited on the Minister of Public Instruction and requested that his Department should purchase the area planned for educational purposes. The request was favorably received and the area was subsequently purchased.

The Commission regrets, however, that this desirable scheme, which has met with the general approval of the authorities concerned, can only be carried out by the co-operation and agreement of the *whole* of the owners within the area treated. This enthusiastic attempt by the Brighton Council to obtain better conditions has, to a large extent, been nullified by the inadequacy of the existing legislation, which will not allow of the satisfactory execution of proposals such as this. This is a further illustration of the pressing need for improved legislation.

UNIFORMITY IN REGULATIONS.

The Victorian Institute of Surveyors has drawn the attention of the Commission to the varying requirements of municipalities in regard to land subdivisions. The frequent amendment of by-laws and changing of officers who have different ideas on subdivisional matters, confuse those dealing with this matter.

The Commission's proposal that all subdivisions should be referred to a central authority would have the effect of overcoming the disabilities now suffered, and make the procedure uniform. The size of allotments, and the various uses to which the land would be devoted, would be governed by the Zoning Regulations outlined in Part IV. The main roads and parks would be in accordance with the Town Planning Scheme prepared for the area. The whole of this information would be available to interested subdividers, who would thus be informed of the town planning provisions in operation in the area, before commencing their subdivisions.
