



Melbourne cut down to size on zoning

BY BIANCA HALL

MELBOURNE has failed in its campaign to have mandatory height controls placed on parts of the city.

The city's planning committee resolved to ask Planning Minister Justin Madden to introduce height limits of nine metres on buildings in some residential zones.

These could have included any new developments in the residential areas of South Yarra, Parkville, Carlton, East Melbourne, Jolimont and parts of North and West Melbourne.

The new zoning category, Residential 3, was introduced by the State Government in 2005 and was designed to foster certainty in councils and developers about suitable development.

Former planning minister Rob Hulls offered all councils the option of nominating areas to be covered by the new height limits, provided the council could prove the restrictions were necessary to protect neighbourhood character.

Against the advice of the council's planning officers, seven councillors, including lord mayor John So, voted in favour of the height limits.

But Mr Madden dismissed the council's decision, ruling that nine-metre limits could result

in "unintended or inappropriate outcomes". He also said that many Melbourne buildings already exceeded nine metres and their heritage value was tied to existing heights.

Councillor Fraser Brindley said the minister's ruling was incomprehensible.

"It was as simple as, 'You can make a planning amendment,' and now they're reneging," he said.

He said Mr Madden's decision would mean that when the council refused developers the right to build higher than nine metres, developers could appeal to the state planning tribunal.

"It just allows it to be discretionary, and that discretion will (lie with) VCAT."

