

'STATE OF SIEGE' EXPOSES HYPOCRISY OF SELF SERVING LAWMAKERS

Public response to Dennis Grosvenor's highly acclaimed documentary, *State of Siege*, has been so strong it is scheduled for a number of return screenings. At its Roseville premiere it played to a packed cinema and was given a standing ovation.

Grosvenor's groundbreaking investigation into political corruption and the relationship between developers and politicians casts a light on the erosion of legislation that has protected neighbourhoods from excessive development for three decades.

That legislation resulted from the green bans initiated by the legendary union leader and environmental campaigner, Jack Munday, during the 1970s.

Munday fought to protect the homes of private citizens from the rapacious greed of developers while also protecting the architectural heritage of Sydney. He is one of a string of prominent Australians to speak out in the film against NSW planning laws and a level of corruption worse than that of the infamous Askin era.

State of Siege questions the manner in which democracy has been cast aside in the interests of big business. At the heart of the matter lies Part 3A of the Planning legislation which overrides the powers of local councils to determine what type of development is appropriate for an area.

Although the film draws on the experience of residents for specific examples, the powerful message it carries is relevant across the whole state of New South Wales where developers have targeted the choicest areas for high density development because that is where the largest and fastest profits can be made.

It is the total disregard for the rights of local residents that spurred Dennis Grosvenor into action. His call for justice has been joined by a long list of notable public figures as well as ordinary citizens who feel they have no voice in what they had always taken for granted as a democratic system of government.

Environmentalist and entrepreneur Dick Smith claims that rezoning a person's land is tantamount to stealing it because the individual has no choice but to sell to a developer who wants to erect ugly apartment blocks.

Once one homeowner caves in to developer pressure, others will follow because they do not want to live next to ugly unit blocks that overshadow their homes and invade their privacy.

In his book *The Justice Game*, the Australian human rights lawyer, Geoffrey Robertson, states that justice matters "because we have an elemental need for reassurance that there is some chance of winning a legal contest against the powers that be."

State of Siege is a cry for justice that reassures us all that our feelings of frustration and helplessness are commonly held. The film has already been compared to the work of filmmaker Michael Moore.

A review by Andrew Miller in the international magazine, *The Berkshire Review*, has hailed it as a work that “provides a fresh breath of air over the depressing corruption we have lived with day to day for a decade.”

“The straight talk of the interviews allowed me to forget about the dreary cant from the government and newspapers for a moment,” Miller said.

**State of Siege will be screened again at the Wesley Mission Centre,
220 Pitt Street, Sydney, on Wednesday 23 March from 6.30pm**