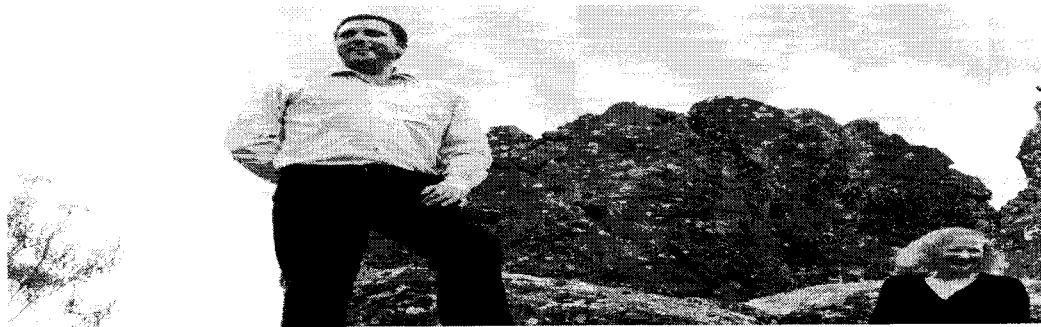


## Watching firmly

By Kylie Kitchen

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Planning Minister, Matthew Guy, walked up Hanging Rock on Friday at the invitation of Member for Northern Victoria, Amanda Millar (pictured). Liberal candidate for Macedon, Donna Petrovich, and representatives from Hanging Rock Action Group and Macedon Ranges Residents Association also joined the walk.

## Planning Minister weighs in on Hanging Rock

In a visit to Hanging Rock on Friday, Planning Minister, Matthew Guy, said he wants to see public opinion considered in the Rock's proposed development.

"There is a lot of community angst about whether their views have been taken into account and I think that's what in the first instance, the council needs to be very clear on," Mr Guy said.

"Process and public engagement are going to be crucial, and that is if anything is to proceed."

Mr Guy said Macedon Ranges Council needs to engage the community in its plans

for a potential accommodation/conference centre development at the iconic Rock's east paddock.

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"It is one of those wonderful, timeless places. When you climb the Rock, suddenly all sound kind of disappears or dissipates and you're left with this wonderful sense of nature up the top," Mr Guy said after walking the Rock.

"Clearly there's a lot of local love for this landmark, so there should be, there's a state love for this landmark ... and so the council's got to be very cognoscente of that."

Mr Guy conceded the State Government could step in further into the process if it was unhappy with the plans.

He met privately with Macedon Ranges Council earlier on Friday to discuss the Hanging Rock Development and Investment Plan.

"I accept what they've said to us which is that they're in a conceptual discussion at the moment. Their view is they want to get to first base, I understand that and what I would say is that in wanting to get to first base they must involve the community in that process," he said

"They need to engage the community and there needs to be a thorough process so the community knows exactly what's happening and what council wants to do.

"There's 6,000 that have signed signatures, it's obviously not a small issue and this council have got to be very cognoscente of that, they have to listen very clearly to what local people are telling them."

Mr Guy said the State Government would like to have some input if the plan progresses further.

"Obviously there's a conceptual idea and if they materialise further from where they are ... I'd be obviously keen for the State to have a greater input as to what is actually being discussed or being proposed," he said.

"It's going to be (council's) decision, it is up to them, but the State Government's going to be watching it firmly.

"We're here to make sure that the primary concern is obviously the protection of the rock and it's environs."