

Midland Express

Rural and staying that way

By Angela Crawford
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On the eve of the state election, both Labor and the Coalition have promised long-awaited state-level protection for the Macedon Ranges.

The commitment will protect the Ranges from over-development and preserve its environmental and rural values.

When elected in 2010, the Coalition State Government committed to planning protection for four shires - Mornington Peninsula, the Yarra Valley, the Bellarine Peninsula and Macedon Ranges. Each local government was charged with undertaking a consultative process resulting in Localised Planning Statements (LPS) which would reflect the unique character of each region.

The government promised the LPS would reflect the values of 'Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 (SPP8) - Macedon Ranges and Surrounds', approved by the State Government in 1975.

But the Macedon Ranges Residents Association said the LPS adopted by Macedon Ranges Council on September 24 this year failed to adequately reference the policy.

On Friday, Labor announced its planning policy, 'Keeping it liveable - Labor's Plan for your Community', which Labor candidate for Macedon, Mary-Anne Thomas, said included a specific commitment to legislate to protect the Macedon Ranges using SPP8 as the basis for legislative protection.

"This commitment is in direct response to the concerns expressed by so many in our community including those who have campaigned so hard against the constant threat of inappropriate development," Ms Thomas said.

Also on Friday, Member for Northern Victoria, Amanda Millar, said that council was meant to include SPP8 in the LPS but update it so it referred to current planning schemes, not those of the 1970s.

"The LPS drafted by Macedon Ranges Shire Council has failed to deliver this," she said.

Ms Millar said a returned Naphine Government would take over the process.

Macedon Ranges Residents Association Secretary, Christine Pruneau, welcomed the commitments.

"State-level protection is long overdue, and this promised support is a great and very welcome outcome for Macedon Ranges."