

Sustainability and Environment: report 2006-07

Mr GUY (Northern Metropolitan) -- May I say that I am thankful that Mr Finn is here to be my audience this morning. I rise to make a statement on the Department of Sustainability and Environment annual report 2006-07. I am not late; I am making a comment on this report because I understand the current year's report will be tabled in a few weeks time.

Mr Finn -- We are all hanging out for that.

Mr GUY -- A number of us are hanging out for it.

I am, and I am interested in the similar statements relating to land supply which appeared on pages 37 and 40 of the 2006-07 report and make a number of references to land supply in rural and regional Victoria, particularly in the Macedon Ranges, which is an area that I, along with my colleagues Donna Petrovich and Wendy Lovell, am keen to ensure retains its charm and character as a unique part of regional Victoria.

It is also worth noting that the annual report talks about land supply and containment of urban sprawl. It is interesting that we talk about containment of urban sprawl. The government released 90 000 housing blocks around the city, so supposedly we are containing urban sprawl. Nevertheless, the report makes some references to rural and regional Victoria.

I want to talk predominantly about the Macedon Ranges, because something very important is happening there in relation to land supply, and it needs to be brought to the fore and addressed. I refer to the government's plans to scrap the Statement of Planning Policy No. 8. This planning policy was brought in in 1975 by the Hamer government, and it should be noted by the house that the Hamer government and its planning in many ways were talked up by former Premier Bracks. Indeed the idea of green wedges started with Mr Hamer, although the Bracks government's legislation expanded it tenfold. However, the green wedges policy certainly started under the Hamer government.

Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 is specific. It identifies the Macedon Ranges as a unique part of Victoria that has some places with a terrific village atmosphere, such as Woodend and Gisborne. More to the point, the policy defines places such as Hanging Rock and Mount Macedon as areas where future urban sprawl and development should not occur.

The reason for limiting urban sprawl in those areas is principally because those parts of Victoria are unique. As we all know, Victoria does not have many of the natural assets that places like Queensland, Western Australia and, to an extent, New South Wales have, therefore we have to maximise what we have in this state. We only have 250 000 square kilometres, so Victoria is much smaller than most parts of the country.

The Macedon Ranges is an area worth protecting, and Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 does that. It ensures that the Macedon Ranges area retains its unique charm and character and that places like Hanging Rock and Mount Macedon remain free from high-density development, which is what the Macedon Ranges will see if Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 is removed. Judging from the

annual report of the Department of Sustainability and Environment, land supply is becoming an even more critical area of government policy to examine.

This planning policy was brought in in 1975 for reasons that still apply today, and those reasons are certainly under threat by the removal of this statement from the local government's planning schedules. What we have seen is the government acting in a bullyboy manner towards the Macedon Ranges Shire Council to demand the removal of this statement from planning policy in the area to ensure that the government's new residential zones document, which is scheduled to be introduced later in the year, can be introduced into the Macedon Ranges, which undoubtedly will force high-density and inappropriate development for areas such as the Macedon Ranges and throughout that Bendigo corridor.

On this side of the house we have no problem whatsoever with decentralisation. It is quite astounding that the Brumby government is population statistics and projections are 50 per cent inaccurate. If you ran a business like that, you would be sacked -- and hopefully these guys will be soon, too.

We understand that a manner in which you can accommodate population growth is through decentralisation; population growth in existing centres with existing

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infrastructure provisions which will make population accommodation much easier and much more accessible, rather than just opening up a new residential zones document to tear into the Macedon Ranges and threaten the character of that beautiful area of Victoria that has been protected by the Statement of Planning Policy no. 8 since 1975.

This one-size-fits-all planning policy of the government has got to stop, and the Macedon Ranges have to be protected. I simply say to the people of the Macedon Ranges that there are people in this Parliament building who are listening to them and who share their concerns for the new residential zones document. Those people are the Liberal Party and The Nationals, and we will ensure that the Statement of Planning Policy no. 8 remains.

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Extract from Hansard, Legislative Council, 9 October, 2008.

Mr. GUY -- Before I go on I would like to talk about the Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 that exists in the Macedon Ranges Shire Council, and I raised this matter the other week. I support the retention of that statement. It is an old policy.

It was brought out in the time of Premier Hamer to protect the Macedon Ranges as a unique part of Victoria. It is like what is being done today with the Yarra Ranges or the Mornington Peninsula -- seeking to establish their own urban character and their own character of country communities. That is all the statement of planning policy seeks to do, but the government wants to kill it.

Mr Finn -- What is the local member doing?

Mr GUY -- The local member appears to be missing in action; I do not know where she has gone. There were two local members up there at one stage. An ex-planning minister used to live up there as well but that did not seem to help the cause of the Macedon Ranges. I went and defended the right of the local community to defend that planning policy. I was opposed by the mayor of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

Mr Finn -- What political party might he be a member of?

Mr GUY -- Interestingly, Mr Finn, the planning minister walked into this chamber and used a press release drafted by the mayor of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council to oppose a newspaper article, which I have, in the Macedon Ranges edition of the Free Press.

Mrs Coote -- What does it say?

Mr GUY -- It says, 'Guy condemns urban sprawl' in the Macedon Ranges, Mrs Coote.

Mr Finn -- Any guy in particular?

Mr GUY -- Yes, this guy -- me.

It says, '--Outrageous-- says mayor', and the mayor, Noel Harvey, 'Sheriff' Harvey, went on to rattle his spurs, being reported as saying:

'Mr Guy is suggesting that we should retain a planning policy that is 30 years old ...

And then as saying:

'Macedon Ranges ... is very mindful of what makes this the most livable rural municipality -

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inviting me to come up there and see what makes it so, and he made a couple of other derogatory comments.

It was picked up by the planning minister in question time, which I found very interesting. One, 'Sheriff' Harvey has not actually given me an invitation to his saloon to wear some spurs and knock through the

counter. It is interesting that the planning minister used the comments of 'Sheriff' Noel Harvey of the Macedon Ranges shire in question time. It is amazing when someone comes into the chamber and self-assassinates themself.

I have been interested in politics for a long time. I remember coming into this Parliament -- I know it is sad -- as an 18-year-old, sitting in the chamber with two mates watching the proceedings, and ultimately I find myself sitting in here in Parliament. But in none of that time have I seen a minister assassinate himself politically, as I did in question time the other day when the planning minister walked in with a press release written by this 'Sheriff' Noel Harvey and started denigrating me for attacking the existence of planning policy no. 8 -- because Noel Harvey is a member of the Kyneton branch of the Australian Labor Party!

Mr Finn -- And has been for 30 years.

Mr GUY -- And has been for a number of years. He is a failed preselection candidate for the Australian Labor Party. Today, the only third-party endorsements that exist at the local government level are the ones you write yourself. The Labor Party walks into the chamber, writes its own third-party endorsement and proceeds to read it out as an independent thought. It might be an independent thought, because he might be from a different faction to the minister.

Mr Finn -- That is possible.

Mr GUY -- So indeed, Mr Finn, maybe that is considered, in Labor Party terms, an independent thought.

Mr Finn -- I think he's SL, actually.

Mr GUY -- He might be Socialist Left; then it might be a different faction. He is not in the Suleyman faction; he is in the Socialist Left faction.

We are reduced to a situation in which the government says independent thought in local government means press releases written by members of the Australian Labor Party, which are then given to the minister to walk into the chamber with to try to do over people who are trying to protect councils. I say to the people of the Macedon Ranges that surely in November, with a mayor who cannot be bothered standing up for the urban and town character of his own community against a government that wants to enforce new residential zones on communities such as those in Woodend, Gisborne, Kyneton and up through the Macedon Ranges, they should question their own sheriff there and ask, 'Is this a man who is independent in thought? Is this a man who challenges the government where it needs to be challenged?'. I think the answer to that is quite clearly no.

More to the point: the planning minister genuinely believed this was somehow independent thought by a member of his own political party.

An honourable member -- A different faction.