

**Letter To Editor**

8 May 2014

***Alert To Everyone Who Wants Macedon Ranges Protected***

A survey on Macedon Ranges Council's website is asking what people (residents and visitors) value in the Macedon Ranges (Have Your Say: Survey of Community Views – Localised Planning Statement).

It's an important survey. It relates to the State government's promise to protect Macedon Ranges with State planning policy and retain *Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 – Macedon Ranges and Surrounds* [SPP8]. Previously State policy, SPP8 is currently Local policy at Clause 22.01 in our planning scheme. The Localised Planning Statement would make it State policy again.

SPP8 is all that stands between a rural, or a suburban, future. It says protecting our environment, water catchments, landscapes and landscape features, towns' rural character, and recreation opportunities has priority in decisions and planning. SPP8 recognises the State significance of the Macedon Ranges to all Victorians, yet also explicitly requires consultation with and equal consideration of the views of the local community.

In MRRA's view, if the Localised Planning Statement isn't SPP8, it's not protection.

Council's Community Views survey is your opportunity to confirm SPP8's priorities are your values and remain relevant, but be wary of the survey's leading questions about rural housing, rural employment and providing tourist/visitor facilities - SPP8 already restricts the first and says protecting the environment takes precedence over the second and third.

We urge you to read the SPP8 policy, and check the policy area map (SPP8's policy area doesn't include the whole Shire – should it?).

This is our last chance to get State policy protection for Macedon Ranges, and the Hanging Rock development is a sample of what happens if we lose SPP8. It has to become a policy no-one can ignore, so make sure **you** have your say.

Christine Pruneau,  
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