

Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 – Macedon Ranges and Surrounds

EXTRACT FROM OPENING ADDRESS

Hon. G. F. Hayes, MP, Minister for Planning (Liberal)

“Mr. Shire President, and your fellow Shire Presidents, Councillors, my two Parliamentary colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

I suppose I know Mount Macedon quite well. I was remarking to Mr. Fraser just the other day that I used to come here for weekends and one of my great pleasures, one I'll never forget, was to ride a horse up to the lookout and back on a day when the pines were just settling to snow. It was beautiful. And it was similarly beautiful this morning with Athol Guy. It was pleasant to meet him at the cock-crowing hour before the fog had lifted, and by about nine o'clock we had the feeling we were coming to the end of a long car trial. Mount Macedon was beautiful this morning - just beautiful.

Let me say at the outset I'm delighted to be at Woodend - not only because it is the heart of a magnificent area of our State - but because today's seminar is giving us the chance to talk about the next major step forward in planning for its future.

This seminar also provides me with the opportunity of stressing my own commitment that the so-called mysteries and the aloofness of planning must disappear. Let's use today as a starter.

Simply, that means that our planning policies must at all times be clear in their presentation - clearly expressed so that all those affected by them can understand them and appreciate them – yourselves – myself.

It is now almost seven months since Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 (Macedon Ranges and Surrounds) was approved by the Government. Time enough for the community to become acquainted with the policy, and time enough for people to start wondering what is going to be done about it.

I believe that now is the right time to clear the air, to make information available, to spell out the government's intentions where they can be spelt out and to give the community a chance to talk about – and start working at - the best possible means of putting the policy to work.

That is the main purpose of today's Seminar.

It is worth considering for a moment the type of area and type of problem that the policy deals with. It is almost old hat to describe the Macedon Ranges as beautiful even though the landscapes of this area are of outstanding beauty, ... to refer to the great recreation potential of this area, because it is well known that thousands of people scramble out of Melbourne every weekend to enjoy themselves in this area; it is equally fair to say nature conservationists sing the praises of the area and water supply engineers stress the need to maintain the quality and quantity of water which they can harvest from the catchments here.

Old hat may be... yet we must constantly remind ourselves of these values and what it will cost us if we fail to plan and manage these valuable resources properly.

Speech by Hon GP Hayes, MP, Minister for Planning,, “Proceedings of a Seminar to Discuss the Statement of Planning Policy for the area held on Saturday, 1st May 1976 at Braemar College, Woodend.”

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You might well ask what is proper planning? As always it is a question of balance. Here in the Macedon Ranges we must conserve natural resource values but use them at the same time. There are a number of problems that have been given us from the past and new pressures which we can see looming in the near future. These must be resolved. To achieve this we need a new system of management that will enable private enterprise and public authorities to work side by side for common objectives.

One often hears the argument that the resources of an area like Mount Macedon have no value at all unless they can be useful to man. Of course there is a lot of truth in that suggestion but it must never be used as an excuse for man to act like a pirate, robbing, plundering and exploiting the environment. That kind of irrational or narrowly conceived exploitation is completely unthinkable.

This is why the Government, on the 30th September, 1975, adopted Statement of Planning Policy No. 8. Our intentions for Mount Macedon are made quite plain in that Statement.

First, this is a multiple use area based on natural resources. This means that water catchments, leisure activities and nature conservation all have a primary importance.

Second, most of the pressures placed on this area come from outside and most of these come from metropolitan Melbourne. The increasing thousands of visitors every weekend and public holiday must be managed so that they don't destroy the resources or interfere with the rights of the local community.

Third, any area as attractive as this looks like a great opportunity for the speculator and land developer. Some development is both necessary and welcome, but anyone who is looking for a "fast buck" or to carve up the land for quick profit just because it is there, can pack his bags and get out.

Fourth, most importantly, in any area like this the local community is of extreme importance. The towns, farms, and the provision of services must be safeguarded and kept at a high quality so that the aspirations of local people can be satisfied.

My Government recognises that much of the quality of this area has resulted from private management of land and resources. The whole community's dependence upon private owners of land for the present and future quality of this environment also has to be acknowledged.

Most people reading Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 will applaud it and recognise that not only does it lay down important principles but that it recognises the need for a balance between private and public administration and between use and preservation. But the policy is only words.

No policy is worth much unless it is put to work. I hope that no one and least of all myself, will ever belittle this policy or the efforts that have gone into producing it. But the main job still lies ahead of us. With the policy as a guide we all have a responsibility to get on to the ground and put these fine principles and ideas into action.

My Government is emphatic that the policy will be put to work and that it will succeed. This is the keynote for the future programme and I believe must be the keynote for our discussions today.

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