

Presentation
Community Forum, Protection for Macedon Ranges
Gisborne 18/11/15

MRRA recently asked its members what they value, and what threatens those values.

Responses echoed community views expressed across 40 years, reaffirming the special qualities of this place remain constant, including:

- Rural areas. Soils. Forests. Dramatic landforms. Natural features. Open spaces. Landscapes.
- Native flora and fauna. Unique ecosystems.
- Low-key rural towns, and lifestyles.
- Connection to place, the land, the environment.
- Diversity. Richness. Beauty.

Threats include:

- High growth. Greed. Land speculation.
- Lack of State level controls, allowing individual and localised interests to prevail.
- Climate change, *particularly fire*.
- Small, bad decisions. Relentless incremental damage.
- Metropolitan development standards, and an incomplete, one-size-fits-all planning scheme.

Additionally, former planning schemes detailed what could be done without damage, and what couldn't, and fostered a culture of 'protection'. While community retains this culture, with Council amalgamations and generic planning schemes, institutions and governments have not.

The following 14 points outline our expectations that protection will:

1. Emphasise why protection is needed, and re-align government thinking and decision-making with a 'protection' culture.
2. Recognise Macedon Ranges Shire has its own identity, strengths, constraints and needs, and is different to Melbourne, Sunbury and neighbouring areas.
3. Recognise the services a protected Macedon Ranges provides to Melbourne's population: proximity, breathing spaces and recreation places.

4. Recognise that **the contrast** between our natural environment and Melbourne is what drives tourism.
5. Provide an enduring legacy of strong legislation and State policy settings that take Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 forward.
6. Protect the entire Shire as the “surrounds” of the Macedon Ranges.
7. Make protection of natural resources, environment, landscapes and rural character **THE** priority for all decisions.
8. Provide certainty about what can and cannot be done, and how it will be done, in this area, including “*must*” and “*must not*” planning controls.
9. Regulate and cap population growth. *Towns spilling into rural land, urbanisation of rural areas and intensifying rural living signal a failure to understand and protect non-renewable resources.*
10. Identify our towns as integral to the ‘bigger picture’, stop their suburbanisation and make existing town boundaries permanent.
11. Defend water catchments and rural areas *with tenement controls and development restrictions, and by requiring parliamentary approval to reduce subdivision sizes.*
12. Build on existing rural strengths *by promoting nature-based tourism and recreation, local produce, and reduced food miles.*
13. Recognise the inter-generational benefits and sustainability of protecting natural resources.
14. Re-empower this community by making it an equal partner in all decision-making.

Our Council is going in a different direction, so it’s up to the community to encourage and support the State government to make strong protection happen, ASAP.

Get involved, stand up for this place, and always keep your eyes on the prize: permanent protection.

453 words