



Warrandyte Community Association

Review of the Urban Growth Boundary

The Warrandyte Community Association is concerned at any proposal to modify the Green Wedge zones of Nillumbik and Manningham. We understand that the purpose of the Review of the Urban Growth Boundary is *'to encourage new housing developments as well as land supply for local employment opportunities'* by identifying *'significant anomalies'* in the current location of the UGB¹. We note that 'the views of affected land owners' will be considered, whilst those of the general public, who also have a legitimate interest in the matter, will not.

The Review appears to be an open invitation to vested private interests to promote ad hoc development without any balancing view from the community at large. The certainty created by existing 'Green Wedge' policy, a valuable planning legacy dating back to the Hamer Government, has been undermined. Certainty is important to enable the climate for longer term State planning and investment. It is the firm view of WCA that the community of Warrandyte and the Warrandyte electorates, including Green Wedge landholders, need and deserve that certainty.

WCA would be fully supportive of the landowners in terms of assistance with agricultural sustainability and management of neglected land – things that we note are only fleetingly addressed in current legislation. We would welcome opportunities to work with the State Government to find creative solutions to perceived problems.

However, any reduction in the extent of the Green Wedge actually has the potential to create problems. As an example, consider the fire-risk situation for Warrandyte/Manningham in the most recent fire-risk area assessment by Department of Planning and Community Development (attached). Note that the area now covers virtually the entire Green Wedge plus several adjacent settled areas of Warrandyte, Park Orchards, Donvale and Wonga Park. As noted by the Bushfire Royal Commission, *houses are fuel* no less than grassland and bushland. There is no justification in encouraging or creating new housing development in this area given the extreme hazard posed by bushfire.

There will always be a minority of landowners who understandably would like to profit from rezoning, but this should not be done at the expense of consistent and sound planning, overall community benefit and the environment. Certainly such change should not take place in the absence of thorough community consultation.

WCA has opposed 'anomalous' development in the past, not always successfully. In the expansion of the Donvale Christian College on Tindal's Road, consultation with WCA resulted at least in bush landscaping to partially ameliorate visual impact. In contrast, the recent fast-track ministerial approval of the final plan for the significant expansion of the 'On Luck' development next door was extremely disappointing and the source of widespread community anger both as to the lack of process and of community consultation.

For over ten years, the WCA has upheld its mandate from its membership of over 350 'to protect the Green Wedge'. Overwhelmingly, the people of Warrandyte appreciate the environmental, botanical, zoological, and landscape values of the Manningham and Nillumbik Green Wedge zones. They are the defining feature of the region as well as well as an invaluable resource to Melbourne as a whole.

WCA would appreciate a written assurance from both Ministers that the existing UGB and Green Wedge in both Manningham and Nillumbik will remain.

¹ Advisory Committee – Review of Urban Growth Boundary Anomalies Outside Growth Areas, letter to Councils from Minister for Planning received August 2011