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Mr. Sean Coley,
Executive Officer,
Outer Suburban/Interface Services & Development Committee,
Parliament of Victoria,
Parliament House,
Spring Street,
EAST MELBOURNE 3002

Dear Mr. Coley

Inquiry into the Impact of the State Government's Decision to change the Urban Growth Boundary.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry. Our family business has been growing cut flowers in the Clyde area (City of Casey) for around 30 years, and is particularly concerned at the prospect of farming on the fringes of encroaching urban development. Like many farmers in the area we need to farm multiple properties, since productivity from the original parcels of land can no longer keep us financially viable. This has led to many inefficiencies and difficulties, including the duplication of facilities such as farm sheds, dams, tractors and irrigation pumps etc. and the need to travel on increasing busy public roads with tractors and agricultural equipment.

These problems, associated with peri-urban farming have previously been examined by your committees; **Inquiry into Sustainable Urban Design for New Communities in Outer Suburban Areas(2004)** and the **Inquiry into the Sustainable Development of Agribusiness in Outer Suburban Melbourne (2009)** and I am sure will be covered more fully in submissions by industry peak bodies such as the Victorian Farmers Federation.

The concern that I have is that for the most part, recent discussion has been reduced to a balancing of the “**right to farm**” against the “**right to live in affordable houses within sustainable communities**”. The various protagonists have sought to advance their cases by altering the position of the UGB either to include or exclude farming land from the prospect of urban development. The exact placing of the UGB is a difficult call, which must be made by Government subject to the best available advice on Melbourne's perceived needs in 2030 and beyond. It is clear however that future generations will not be able to solve their population needs by continuously expanding the ring of urban growth surrounding Melbourne, and that other solutions need to be considered; such as increasing the population density within the existing urban sprawl or developing regional city centres. It is, therefore likely that the current changes to the UGB will be long-lasting and it is imperative that they be made with due diligence.

It is vital that the UGB (whether changed or not) have well defined characteristics to reduce the negative impact on housing and developing industries. As farmers we are concerned with the right to farm, or rather the right to viably farm. The viability of farms is severely jeopardised in peri-urban areas. This can ONLY be addressed by the relevant authorities, both State and local making appropriate policy decisions. Development around the UGB where it juxtaposes farming land ought to be governed by well defined policies that balance the right to farm against the right to live in affordable houses within sustainable communities.

Policies that ensure that where viable farming land and suburbia meet, there will be appropriate buffer zones of decreasing population densities (parklands, industry, smaller land holdings, hobby farms, acre-blocks etc). The UGBs can not simply be determined by existing landmarks, main roads, train tracks etc. They can not simply be a line on a map which prescribes development on one side (the side destined for housing) but leaves adjacent farming unaltered.

The repercussions for both residence and farmers can be profound. Neighboring householders would need to tolerate normal farming practices that involve, noise (tractor, truck, machinery, irrigation, farm animals, bird scarers), odour (fertilizer and spreading, animals, silage, sprays, irrigation water, compost), dust (as a consequence of cultivating soil, moving stock, fertilizer spreading), spraying and soil fumigation and the presence of bees necessary to pollinating many farmed commodities. Clearly farmers need to be allowed to farm, to remain viable and productive. They can not do this in a peri-urban setting if appropriate buffer zones are not set in place. The consequences of the less desirable aspects of intensive farming on neighboring households can be mitigated by having a band of low density houses, hobby farms, parklands etc.. between urban communities and farms. If we ignore the need for appropriate buffer zones we run the risk of encountering problems such as those at Brookland Greens Estate, Cranbourne, where houses were allowed to be built close to adjoining landfills.

In the absence of appropriate buffer zones farms abutting urban development will be condemned to a farming inefficiently and in increasing conflict with neighbouring households. Ultimately tensions will increase and farmers will be forced to sell and relocate. Unfortunately these farms will not be attractive to other farmers and will eventually deteriorate until they are only suitable for land-banking and running a few, horses, cows or sheep. The rates on such properties will be disproportionately high compared to their capacity to produce income, further diminish land values until the properties themselves become derelict. This tendency is readily observed in certain farms within existing Green Wedge areas around Dingley and Clayton.

The Government is taking advantage of the current round of changes to the UGB, to ensure that best practices are observed by builders and developers, that they exercise appropriate sensitivity to the environment, and the life style (employment, shopping, schooling, and transport) prospects of future residences. Similar considerations should be made about farming in peri-urban areas. If it is no longer feasible to farm in areas abutting urban

development, if farming becomes inefficient because farmers need to be working several non-adjointing properties; then it would be better that those farmers be given the opportunity to realise the capital investment in their land and establish new, modern efficient farms on larger acreages in the potentially rich, fertile land belt identified by the Casey/Cardinia/ South Gippsland Shires and referred to as the Bunyip Food Belt .

I like also add that current changes to the UGB, need to incorporate the township of Clyde. Clyde was once a lovely rural hamlet, quietly servicing the surrounding rural community. Sadly it cannot be kept as a museum piece, large housing developments are earmarked for the eastern side of Clyde-Fiveways road, a stones throw from Clyde. It would not be appropriate to leave the Clyde Township with unsealed roads and open drains. It is not appropriate to leave the residence of Clyde with substandard facilities. Natural incorporating Clyde within the UGB will require making necessary provisions for buffer zones with adjacent farms.

The impact of changes to the UGB can not be left to chance. Sustainable urban design is not only necessary to develop new communities in outer suburban area but it is vital for the survival of peri-urban farms which make significant contributions to the economy in general and food production in specific.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe Zappia', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Joe Zappia