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ATTACHED SUBMISSION TO THE OUTER-SUBURBAN INTERFACE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

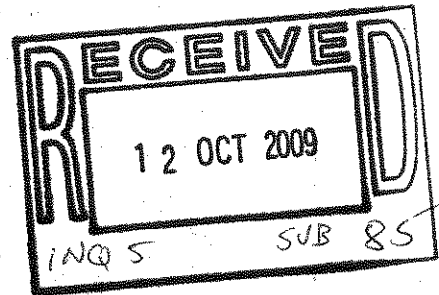
SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT

ENQUIRY

FORWARDED BY CARDINIA RATEPAYERS & RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION INC.

12/10/09

Tel: 0359427739



Submission to the Outer Suburban Interface Services & Development Committee of Enquiry

Ref. Urban Growth Boundary and GAIC Issues

I preface this submission with criticism and strong concern regarding the refusal by the Department of Planning & Community Development to make available for public viewing any of the submissions received concerning the review and proposed extension of the Urban Growth Boundary. On a proposal as serious as this and with such possible future momentous consequences, such lack of transparency is inexcusable.

Just 3 years after Melbourne 2030 policy was established, the 2005 shift in the urban growth boundary occurred in the south-east (Cardinia Shire). At the end of 2008 a government report stated that a further 22,833 hectares of green wedge land would need to go to development. Now in 2009, 26,093 hectares are required plus 15,570 that is regarded not suitable for development, making a total in excess of 41,000 hectares green wedge land proposed for inclusion in an expanded Urban Growth Boundary. The Green Wedge Policy commitment made by three earlier State governments (which was no doubt influential in the re-election of Premier Bracks at that time) has been betrayed by the current government led by Premier Brumby and therefore the Victorian community of taxpayers and ratepayers can only anticipate that the urban growth boundary will be shifted whenever the policy makers decide to do so.

It is significant to recognize that as a consequence of the 2005 change in the Urban Growth Boundary, certain Cardinia Shire residents have been severely impacted already by enormous increases in their council rates assessment which is based on the so-called increase in value of their land, which to date is not evident as development may not occur until 2015/25. This same impact will occur on landowners across Victoria if their properties are included in the proposed new urban growth areas, and local councils need to be mindful of this occurrence. The State government intention to impose a tax on landowners (Growth Area Infrastructure Contribution Charge) as a result of their property being included in the Urban Growth Boundary is seen as a poorly devised and highly inequitable means of raising government revenue which requires serious reconsideration. Such charges should be levied on the commercial developer at the time of subdivision when expected large profits are generated.

The 'unprecedented' population growth frequently mentioned in every document relating to urban growth and property development has not come about by chance, but is the result of proactive government policy which insists that exponential growth is a benefit for everyone. Creating fringe communities which are socially disadvantaged and remote from jobs and services is the subject of a study by Curtin University. Nowhere are these problems more evident than in the nominated growth corridor suburbs where mortgage default, unemployment, antisocial and criminal behaviour are manifest and arterial roads choked with traffic congestion contribute to environment pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

The inclusion of large tracts of valuable food growing land in the proposed revised urban growth boundary is viewed as counteractive to productivity and the future welfare of Victorian citizens.

The loss of countless sensitive wetlands (with no possibility of replacement) is environmental ly destructive. Turning over grassy woodlands, native vegetation and habit linkages along sensitive waterways for housing development will further contribute to greenhouse gas emissions as the lack of rain, dry conditions and higher temperatures produced by acres of concrete and bitumen cannot be ignored when considering climate change.

Loss of such green wedge areas cannot be justified and their ecological value to future Victorian citizens in all areas should receive greater consideration than is being given by this urban growth boundary review. Statements such as "Impacts on the habitat of the Southern Brown Bandicoot and Growling Grass Frog can be minimized" is an admission that environmental considerations will be secondary to housing development policy when decisions are to be made. Sustainable development is no longer possible as we continue to consume our environment and the future of our children and grandchildren.

It is considered that any expansion of the Urban Growth Boundary will be permanently detrimental to the wellbeing of Victorian ratepayers, residents and taxpayers generally, and it is recommended that a review of current population-increase policy be urgently initiated, taking into account its social, environmental and economic impact on the Victorian community at this time.

An opportunity to present to the Committee on this issue would be appreciated. The only suitable date would be 22nd October 2009, if possible please.

Gloria O'Connor
President
Cardinia Ratepayers & Residents Association Inc.

12/10/09