

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT AMENDMENT (DISTINCTIVE
AREAS AND LANDSCAPES) BILL 2017
Second reading

Debate resumed from 22 February; motion of Ms MIKAKOS (Minister for Families and Children).

Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) (12:50) — I am pleased to rise and make a contribution on behalf of the coalition on the Planning and Environment Amendment (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes) Bill 2017. This is a bill that has general support for its broad principles. It has general support for the broad objectives which it seeks to set out, and I am going to read those objectives directly from an easy copy of the bill rather than a bound-up one because they are objectives that I think most people in this chamber generally support.

The objectives of the bill are:

(a) to amend the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to provide for—

(i) the declaration of distinctive areas and landscapes; and

(ii) the preparation and implementation of a Statement of Planning Policy in relation to each declared area to ensure coordinated decision-making by public entities; and

(b) to make consequential amendments ...

The broad objectives are agreed on, particularly as they apply to many of the peri-urban areas around Melbourne. I can say that the coalition has strong support for the protection of those peri-urban areas of Melbourne and the areas just beyond the peri-urban areas where commuters often live and from where they come to Melbourne. These local communities play a very significant role in the state's future and its activities, both economically and socially.

It is important to know that there is a very long history of these types of attempts to provide protections for these areas. It is also important to understand the context of the state's very significant population growth. At the moment, frankly, Victoria's population is growing at an unprecedented rate — almost 150 000 per year the last two years, with the overwhelming majority of those people going into Melbourne, particularly the edges of Melbourne. But there is significant population pressure in many of the commuter areas just beyond the urban growth boundary and into the areas of country Victoria close to Melbourne.

There is no doubt that those areas of country Victoria can contribute significantly to the management of that population, but those people are often situated in sensitive areas that deserve proper protection. Indeed many people live in those areas precisely because of the ambience and quality of life they

provide — precisely because of the vegetation, the wildlife and, as I say, the ambience, of those townships and the areas in the immediate hinterland. This is one of those cases where there has to be significant protection to make sure that those areas are not overrun in an unsophisticated and unfortunate way by the population pressures that are very much part of the state at the moment.

As I say, the majority of the population growth is going into Melbourne, particularly in the growth areas around the edge of Melbourne — Cardinia, Casey, Hume, Mitchell, Melton and Wyndham — but also parts to the edge of Greater Geelong. Those pressures are indeed very significant.

The attempt to provide protections to areas that are distinctive and areas of distinctive landscape is something with a long history. In the 1970s the Liberal Party, then in government — and then in government alone, not as part of a coalition — did provide those protections. Particularly Sir Rupert Hamer's period in government was marked by a focus on protecting the quality of life. In 1970s people became, I think, more and more aware of the need to protect the hinterland and the areas around the city, so specific and specialised localised planning statements were developed for the Yarra Ranges and the Macedon Ranges, and most famously the Macedon Ranges localised planning statement number 8 was put in place in that period in the 1970s. I pay tribute to Sir Rupert Hamer and his government through that period.

I pay tribute in the case of Macedon to someone who is familiar to us in a different capacity, Athol Guy, who was at that time the local member for Gisborne and was determined to make sure that those protections for local communities were in fact put in place. Similarly in the Yarra Ranges there were protections put in place, and Bill Borthwick and others were very active in driving the establishment of those protections and a determination to recognise that there had to be some focus on saying, 'No, we can't let development roll over at any cost. We can't lose each piece of vegetation. We can't have our streams put at risk. We can't lose' — indeed in many cases — 'the animal life and so forth that is very much part of those areas on the edge of the city', areas just beyond the main growth areas focus of those localised planning statements in the 1970s. To this day they underpin many of the planning protections that are in those areas.

As I say, I am proud to have known a number of the movers — I know the President and I both knew a number of them over the years — who were great contributors to the state and very forward thinking in terms of the need to manage the impacts of population growth. It is interesting to see that the more things change, the more they stay the same. The same pressures are there now, and the same need is there to actually think carefully as a community, to think

carefully as a Parliament and to think carefully as a planning department and planning minister about what steps have to be put in place.

I was saying to some developers and others over the last couple of days, ‘You know, the huge population growth is a call for greater protection, in my view, of vegetation. It’s a call for greater protection of open space’. More population means more recreation areas, more open space and more focus on quality of life, because there is, I think, a real need to recognise that if you do not protect the quality of life, you are at risk of losing what is unique and special about Melbourne, Victoria and the hinterland immediately beyond the city.

Today on the front page of the *Australian* — and I invite people to go and read it, perhaps go online — you will see some very good work by the Property Council of Australia. They have had some English experts look at a number of the metrics around quality of life in Australian cities to make some useful comparisons. We are all familiar and indeed proud of the fact that Melbourne is repeatedly — I think seven times in a row — voted the most livable city in the world on the *Economist* index. The *Economist* index is a very useful index. It actually understands a number of the metrics that pick up the quality of life that is part of our city and part of what is attractive to us about our city, but it is true to say that the metrics in that are not perfect and not unchallengeable. Indeed the property council, through the release of these papers today, has I think furthered the cause of understanding what it is to have a livable city, to measure what a livable city is and to use those measures to track what is occurring in our city.

PwC did some very good work recently and, in conjunction with the *Herald Sun*, released a series of examinations of accessibility. We intuitively know this, but nonetheless it is very interesting when they actually go and use various metrics. We know that those areas very close to the city and the very first ring of suburbs are more livable because of the accessibility of services and the reduced commute times that people generally have to their workplaces, to their schools and to the other facilities that they need. The PwC work pointed to deficiencies in quality of life for people on the edge of the city in western suburbs and in the far east. Again we intuitively know this to be true, given the lack of services that are put there and the lack of focus on getting transport services there. I know I am not telling anyone in this chamber anything they do not know, but it is sometimes worthwhile putting this clearly on the record. Those metrics are actually helpful in understanding how to deal with the challenges and deal with the problems. I again pay tribute not just to the *Economist* and its measures, which after all are largely driven by the question, ‘Is the city livable and comfortable for an expat who is landing here and seeking to integrate into society?’. That is the basis for the *Economist*’s view on

livability, but the PwC metrics, I think, go deeper and look at some of the challenges that we face.

The property council data that has been released today shows that, on a number of metrics, Melbourne has a lot of work to do. Sydney has a lot of work to do. We face those huge challenges, Sydney and Melbourne in particular with their huge population growth, and Melbourne beyond the others because of the extraordinary pace of growth over the last decade, particularly the last two or three years.

The metrics that are picked up by the work that is done by the property council analysis I think do give us cause to reflect — they give us cause to think about how we can protect the quality of life and the livability of Melbourne into the future. I will be paying close attention to those papers that are being released today and looking at them, as I think many will, in the light of the material that is already in the public domain, because we have that challenge to preserve the livability of our closer suburbs, the livability of our hinterland around the city and also the growth areas on the edge of the city. The attempts in the 1970s to say that we need to put these localised planning statements in place I think were very far-reaching and very forward-looking. That is why I singled them out particularly for discussion.

Understanding that genesis of what is going on here, the government has put forward a bill, the Planning and Environment Amendment (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes) Bill. It amends the Planning and Environment Act 1987 to provide for the protection and conservation of distinctive areas and landscapes, to make consequential amendments et cetera. It amends the Planning and Environment Act to provide for the declaration of distinctive areas and landscapes and then the preparation and implementation of a statement of planning policy in relation to each declared area to ensure coordinated decision-making by public entities.

As I say, the objective is important. The purpose of the statement for the declared area is to create a framework for the future use and development of land in the declared area, including settlement boundaries, and to ensure the protection and conservation of the distinctive attributes of the declared area. Such declarations support the local and/or statewide significance of certain areas, regions and landscapes environmentally, economically and culturally and on Indigenous matters. This is actually a quite significant point, to understand that these declarations are not about just the local view but also the economic significance of some of these regions.

I am going to pick Macedon because it is the one where, to be fair, the government has done the most work. I will come to the deficiencies in its work in a minute, but it has done more work there than in other places. One of the points is that that Macedon area is of economic significance in a tourism sense not just to the Macedon area itself but to the state as a whole. For those reasons you would want to preserve it. You would also want to make sure that it is protected in a cultural sense. There are actually culturally important areas. Hanging Rock is one of those areas in that municipality that has enormous cultural significance for Indigenous people but is also a recognised landmark for Europeans. You would want to protect and preserve an area of that nature and make sure that it could not be tampered with, destroyed or otherwise damaged into the future. If that is the purpose that the government is seeking with this, that is something with which we wholeheartedly agree as an objective. It is also important I think to realise that there may be areas of particular environmental significance, and we would want to see protections of those areas advanced as well.

Obviously this is all about balance too. We do recognise that there is population growth and we do recognise that there will be a need to accommodate greater numbers of people. But you cannot do that in a way where you actually damage the outcome. You cannot do that in a way where the goose that lays the golden egg is killed. There is no sense in that; that is nuts. We actually want to make sure that that quality of life that attracts people to the area, not only to live there but also to come there for economic and cultural purposes, is protected. These are the challenges that we face in balancing these objectives in a particular area. The government has done a fair bit of work and it has met with significant opposition in the Macedon Ranges. Pretty much everyone I have spoken to agrees with the broad objectives, but when you come down to the localised planning statement (LPS), the draft statement that the government has been talking to the community about, there is very little support for it. I know I have spoken in this chamber about this before. There is a need to recognise that the government's description of town boundaries is not grounded in fair reality. The government's decisions on that localised planning statement have ridden roughshod over the local community. They had not been formally ticked as yet, but if the version that the government intends to tick is the one that it is consulting on now, I think we have a significant problem.

Our broad support for the principle is there, but our concern about where the government is going locally is something I am also registering very loud and clear. I pay particular tribute in this respect to the work of the Macedon Ranges Residents Association. I have met with them on a number of occasions, including recently, about a number of the points. They pick up some of the points and I know that they are very unhappy with the government's approach

on some of these points. I am going to quote here. They say about their assessment:

The association circulated the ‘assessment’ to Macedon Ranges Shire councillors and CEO —

the minister and others —

We have received acknowledgement ...

They go on about the ‘less protection statement’ — the LPS, the localised planning statement, which they are calling the less protection statement:

From its assessment, the association concluded the draft LPS failed to provide any protection whatsoever to Macedon Ranges. In fact, it undermines existing protections and planning controls and provides even less protection than available today. The association recommended a complete rewrite, not as a localised planning statement but as a statement of planning policy required by the draft bill, with further community consultation.

It is understood that the state government intends to transform the draft LPS into the statement of planning policy required by the proposed legislation ...

The legislation sets up a head of power to create such statements of planning policy ‘without any further community consultation’. That is problematic, and I put on record our opposition to that part of the government’s process.

The Macedon Ranges Residents Association goes on:

This is unacceptable, as is LPS’s inaccurate claim that SPP8 has been ‘superseded’ by the Victoria planning provisions. Statement of planning policy no. 8 —

which is the earlier one I am talking about from the 1970s, the Sir Rupert Hamer era —

prevents inappropriate land use and development. As we have learned to our bitter regret, the Victoria planning provisions do not.

They go on to an overview, and I think it is actually worth quoting directly from their document here:

It is as if the draft localised planning statement has been written in a vacuum, by someone with no connection to or knowledge of or empathy with this place, and with total disregard and disrespect for the area’s sensitivities, natural resources, special attributes, rural character and community values.

The LPS parades, and is touted, as ‘protection’ but in reality it is a covert and hideous growth plan on an unprecedented scale, which seems to regard Macedon Ranges as just so much real estate. It turns one of Victoria’s most environmentally fragile and sensitive areas into a metropolitan growth area.

I think this really sticks in the craw of people on the edge of the city and out further. They actually do not want to live in suburban Melbourne. They have actually chosen specifically to live in areas that have a different ambience, a different quality of life and a different liveability. For a rollover by the government in this context, I think it is quite, quite concerning.

The draft LPS direction is highly characteristic of the previous Macedon Ranges Council’s obsessive priority for economic development and growth ...

I put on record that I am not opposed to economic development and growth. I think it is critical, but it has to be balanced. It goes on:

a direction which saw community satisfaction fall a full 6 points in the 2016 ... and seven (of nine) new councillors elected at the 2016 council election —

new councillors —

That was the council that in 2016 told the Macedon Ranges Protection Advisory Committee Macedon Ranges already had enough protection, that ignored its adopted settlement strategy, that promoted a \$40 million equine centre ...

It talked about some of these. There is also talk — and I think concerning talk — about a ‘large-scale commercial development at Hanging Rock’. There are serious risks in that. The document goes on:

This must be corrected. Protected from over-development, this shire can provide far more pleasure to far more people than the few whose interests would be served —

and it goes on.

In summary, the LPS — the localised planning statement:

- (1)comprehensively fails to deliver the state government’s commitment to protect Macedon Ranges;
- (2)fails to meet the draft legislation’s requirements, and the format ...
- (3)fails to be based on or even retain any aspect of statement of planning policy no. 8 —

by eliminating SPP8, the draft LPS also eliminates the strategic and policy bases for planning controls ...

- (4)fails to include and implement the Macedon Ranges Protection Advisory Committee’s adopted recommendations ...

- (5) fails to provide a protective state policy setting for Macedon Ranges, as statement of planning policy no. 8 always has;
- (6) fails to clearly define its purpose, saying only that ‘The statement aims to support efforts to ... identify and protect state-significant landscapes, environmental and cultural heritage features within the Macedon Ranges...

In contrast, in comparison, statement of planning policy number 8 says:

The statement is directed primarily to the planning and management necessary for the conservation and utilisation of the policy area both as a water catchment for urban and local supply and as a location of state, metropolitan and local importance for leisure activities and nature conservation.

You can feel the difference in tone between number eight in the 1970s and the state government — Daniel Andrews’ version of this that he is circulating now.

- (7) presents individual policy domains that lack the integration necessary in an area with complex and multiple issues;
- (8) contains ‘policy domains’ which are unrelated to protecting the shire’s special attributes —

and it goes on.

- (9) fails to provide definitive and mandatory policy statements and instead has broad, aspirational ‘objectives’ ...
- (10) fails to create a framework for integrated policy ...
- (11) fails to set priorities for protection of the shire’s special attributes ...

Again, in comparison to statement number 8, which sets clear policy and priorities, saying:

The planning policy to be applied in the area ... 2.1 Protection and utilisation of the resources of the policy area for water supply, tourism and recreation, and nature conservation shall be the primary concern.

There is a hierarchy — a ranking in statement number eight — which is not present in the government’s proposal for its LPS. I draw that distinction between the aspirations in the bill, which are supported widely, and the implementation by the LPS that the government has as a current draft.

- (13) unlike SPP8 and the advisory committee’s preferred LPS and recommendations, fails to include any implementation measures;
- (14) fails to set a 50-year vision for protection of Macedon Ranges ... instead sets a 50-year land supply. Its vision ‘statements’ are quite laughably off-target and weak;
- (15) fails to make itself binding on responsible public entities (including a council) which downgrades any requirements into recommendations;
- (16) fails to identify and address threats;
- (17) incompletely identifies values and attributes — its ‘biodiversity’ map refers the reader to a website, while its ‘state-significant landscapes and water features’ map only shows 6 landscape features, and leaves off half of the shire’s water catchments;
- (18) fails absolutely to address protection of township character ...

which the advisory committee believes is a cornerstone.

- (19) fails to identify and address values and natural resources as entities in their own right ...
- (20) only turns its mind to individual elements of biodiversity, landscapes and heritage of state or national significance. It then further condenses landscape into six 'landscape features' ...
- (21) fails to include statement of planning policy no. 8 as its reference document ...
- (22) lists irrelevant, redundant and draft references but fails to include critical documents such as the Macedon Ranges cultural heritage and landscape study (1994), Macedon Ranges habitat quality and conservation significance framework (2004) and any other environmentally-focused document, including the 2016 Macedon Ranges natural environment strategy.

There are just two more I want to draw attention to:

- (23) fails to identify 'protected settlement boundaries'.

Mr Melhem interjected.

Mr DAVIS — This is quite important, Mr Melhem. I know you might not find this amusing, but it is actually something of importance to people in the Macedon Ranges and the hinterland around there. It continues:

... a note that 'will be protected settlement boundaries'.

- (24) only provides settlement boundaries for four of six towns. Intentions for Gisborne and Romsey are to be kept a secret for another 18 months.

That is a very extensive list of flaws in the approach that has been adopted by the government, and I am thankful to the Macedon Ranges Residents Association and to Christine Pruneau in particular for the enormous and detailed work that they have done on this. I could go on and quote at length much more of this, but I think the key point is now clear and the concern areas are well illuminated by that important list. The settlement boundaries are important. They need to get a better outcome on that. We are concerned that if we in good faith pass this unamended the government will use the head of power there — which can be used for good — for ill. That is our concern. It is for that reason that I will shortly circulate proposed amendments.

I want to make some comments about some other areas, though, that are important. In July 2014 the *Mornington Peninsula Localised Planning Statement* (LPS) was released. Matthew Guy was the Minister for Planning, and this statement is an important statement and protection for the Mornington Peninsula. I make the point here that the Mornington Peninsula was for a long period growing much more slowly than the other edge-of-the-city areas, but that is not the case now, with growth at around 4 per cent a year. It is a very significant growth rate, and there is very significant pressure being put on the Mornington Peninsula. You can feel it when you drive down Peninsula Link.

You can feel the density of traffic and the huge surge that is there almost any time of the day. It is very clear that more Melburnians are commuting from a greater distance onto the peninsula. The pressures of population are significant. The Mornington Peninsula statement — and I pay tribute to Matthew Guy and the work that was done when we were in government, and this has been retained by the current government — I think is potentially at risk through this bill. We need to have that clarity about the need for an LPS and the requirement to have a good-quality LPS as part of a Mornington Peninsula localised planning statement. I am going to quote again from this because I think it is important to get these points on the record:

The Mornington Peninsula will be planned as an area of special character and importance with a role clearly distinct from and complementary to metropolitan Melbourne and designated growth areas.

The Mornington Peninsula is one of Melbourne's greatest assets, characterised by contained townships, a substantial and diverse local economy, and areas of national and international conservation significance. The Mornington Peninsula is critical to the future livability, sustainability and prosperity of the wider metropolitan region.

As an area near to, but with a role distinct from, the growing metropolitan area there are ever-increasing pressures and demands placed on the Mornington Peninsula. For this reason it is necessary to put in place clear policy directions for the long-term benefit of both local communities and the wider Melbourne population.

It goes on to say:

This includes:

recognising, maintaining and enhancing the special values of the Mornington Peninsula;

appreciating the existing diversity and delicate balance of land use, which has been carefully planned over a long period ...

Again the wedges, the green wedges areas that were put in place by Sir Rupert Hamer, are a very significant part of that. It continues:

providing for a clear separation of the Mornington Peninsula from metropolitan Melbourne, preventing expansion of the metropolitan area onto the peninsula and maintaining the current settlement patterns;

expressing the planning priorities for the Mornington Peninsula, which are different from and complementary to those...

in other areas. This is why these have got to be genuinely localised planning statements; they cannot be, you know, printed off. They are not the same as the one for the Glen Eira or the one for Boroondara or the one for Kingston or the

one for Moonee Valley; they are actually different and quite unique to metropolitan Melbourne. It continues:

integrating environmental, social and economic considerations;

supporting a strong land use planning framework, providing certainty for landowners and the community over time.

I want to use the Mornington Peninsula as the case study for where the government has actually headed in this recent period. *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* did not draw a deep and sharp enough distinction between the peninsula and the rest of Melbourne, so I begin with that. The Mornington Peninsula was chucked in with the southern municipalities, and they were treated pretty much as a job lot in the state of play document that was released in early February 2016 that the government sought to look at the population movements and land use patterns with. It did not set up a sufficient distinction for the Mornington Peninsula.

When *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* came it was presaged that there would be some planning amendments that would deal with densification across Melbourne. I understand that there will be areas where there will be more dense development in parts of Melbourne. That is as it should be, but that should be properly managed and properly supported. There should be significant local buy-in on that and there should be support in terms of local services and access.

But in fact what *Plan Melbourne: Refresh* announced and then in May implemented through VC110 was a process of forced densification that did not sufficiently take account of the local focus. The cat was well and truly out of the bag then. Infrastructure Victoria had released its early reports. It had said the primary objective in metropolitan Melbourne was densification. That was the number one objective in the early reports of Infrastructure Victoria. The planning minister referred to densification repeatedly, saying municipalities were going to have to cop more.

Today I am leaving aside the debates about metropolitan areas proper and close to the city and so forth. We can have those debates another day. It is sufficient to say that forced densification is not popular — it is not popular when not supported by proper infrastructure and it is not popular when it is foisted on local communities. But it is particularly objectionable when it comes to these hinterland areas like the Mornington Peninsula. People have moved to those areas for distinctive lifestyles. They actually want a different quality of life. In the Mornington Peninsula you have got areas of agricultural production. You have got areas of vegetation that are protected. You have got seaside townships.

These are not areas that I think should be the target of forced densification, but they are.

VC110, the planning amendment that came through in May 2017, stripped away the neighbourhood residential zone protections that were put there in 2013 and 2014. They were put across the metropolitan area by Matthew Guy with the specific intention of protecting the character and nature of suburbs.

Neighbourhood residential zone protections that were 8-metre heights and two dwellings per property have gone under VC110. The general residential zone (GRZ) height protection of 9 metres has now gone to 11 metres minimum — higher in some versions of the GRZs — and there is an as-of-right three storeys.

Currently on the Mornington Peninsula in the area that is subject to the localised planning statement — and that in my view ought to be a focus for a significant landscape and distinctive area declaration — you can as of right on GRZ land do three storeys. That is not what is in the focus of those communities. That is not what they want. I know that there has been a huge petition presented to this Parliament by Christine Hayden and some of the community groups on the peninsula with, I think, nearly 10 000 signatures. People are unhappy with the forced nature of the general residential zone changes. They are unhappy with the plans of the government in VC110. They are unhappy that their version and view of their community has been rolled over by the government as it has ripped planning powers away from the local council and taken them to itself through these processes, allowing as-of-right development of much greater intensity than was previously the case.

The Liberals sought to give high protection to areas like the Mornington Peninsula, and the GRZs that were declared actually had that cap. That has been lifted to allow as-of-right three storeys. Think of those small seaside towns. Think of Dromana. Think of Mount Martha. I do not think they are the places that Melburnians think should have intense development of this type. No-one is saying that in the depth of the township there ought not be some development, but people are saying that GRZs which spread out from the township ought not be open season for intense development of this type.

That is one of the reasons that the amendments I will seek to move later will seek to suppress the impact of VC110 on four areas: the Bellarine, the Mornington Peninsula, the Yarra Ranges and the Macedon Ranges. They will be to say, 'Look, if you're going to declare these areas distinctive and significant landscapes, it's nuts to parallel with that arrangements that give you as-of-right intense development. It's actually a dichotomy. If you're seeking to protect the landscape and protect the vegetation, allowing three-storey intense

development is not the way to get that sort of development that the community wants’.

Leaving aside the bigger debate in Melbourne about VC110 and whether it is a good system and just focusing in this instance on those four important regions peripheral to Melbourne — important to those local communities and important playgrounds, tourism centres, economic centres and cultural centres for the whole of Melbourne, which is precisely what is meant to be the nature of a significant landscape declaration — we should be suppressing intense and thoughtless development that has not gone through the proper processes and is not consistent in many cases with the objectives that are laid out.

About these matters I spoke to one quite large meeting and then to a second smaller meeting on the Mornington Peninsula, and it is very clear to me that there is not support for that sort of intense development on the Mornington Peninsula. The large number of petitions that have been tabled in this Parliament are also a very clear indication that that is the case. There is not support for it, as I said, in the Macedon Ranges. People in that community do not want intensity of development, and they do not want the larger townships that are proposed in the government’s LPS. They want sensible, balanced, controlled development that maintains the quality of life and the ambience of those areas.

There are other areas around the hinterland of Melbourne that are also incredibly important. The Yarra Ranges localised planning statement was adopted on 27 June 2017.

The question is: how will this fit in with this declaration? We are certainly not opposed to further strengthening and further protections being put in place. This planning statement looks at the *Upper Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Regional Strategy Plan*, the so-called regional strategy plan, which has held an important role for a lengthy period of time.

The Victorian government in partnership with local government has looked to establish localised planning statements for key areas. These areas are highly valued for their significant geographic and physical features and are a distinctive part of our state. The Yarra Ranges regional strategy plan goes back to the original regional planning authority and was adopted by the Victorian government in 1982. I quote from the plan:

When the regional planning authority was disbanded, the regional strategy plan continued to be administered under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 ... the act requires that no change (amendment) to the Yarra Ranges planning scheme may be made if it is inconsistent with the regional strategy plan.

That has been, again, an important protection that goes back to the Hamer government days, and it has actually helped with an additional layer of protection of that hinterland area that is so important — and important, I might add, for Melbourne’s water supply. Make no mistake, most of our water comes from areas that are covered by this particular planning statement.

It lays out the values of the Yarra Ranges. This document seeks to provide those protections, but again we make the point that something like VC110 does weaken the GRZ protections in an area like the Yarra Ranges, and it does weaken the neighbourhood residential zone protections in an area like Yarra Ranges. I do not think that is where the community is. I do not think that is where the community wants to go. For that reason, we will again seek to amend in this way.

It is likewise on the Bellarine Peninsula. You think of the growth that is occurring in the City of Greater Geelong, in particular down past Armstrong Creek but also moving across into the Bellarine Peninsula. There is a need for significant protections. There is significant growth on the Bellarine Peninsula, and there will be further pressures given the growth in population in Geelong. That needs to be properly managed. No-one is saying that that region of the city cannot or should not or will not carry an additional population load. It will. Particularly in the area down through Armstrong Creek and to the south of Geelong there is going to be very significant growth in the period ahead. Families are moving there. Part of the reason for that is the price of land, but part of it is because of the quality of life and the ambience of the particular area. It is near the coast. It is a coastal environment, in that sense, that deserves significant focus on protections about what is valuable about its coastal hinterland.

As a community, as Melburnians, as Victorians, we have got to be thinking about making sure that these areas are available for future generations and that they are not put at risk for future generations. And the community, I think, expects us to take a long view on this that says, ‘Yes, development can occur, but it’s got to be balanced in a way that seeks those protections into the future’. It might be an opportune time to distribute our amendments.

Opposition amendments circulated by Mr DAVIS (Southern Metropolitan) pursuant to standing orders.

Mr DAVIS — Essentially these amendments take no power away from the minister but at the same time define a localised planning statement to mean:

... a statement that is described as a localised planning statement and prepared by the Department in partnership with one or more municipal councils and adopted by the Minister, in relation to land sufficiently identified in the statement—

(a) that has distinctive areas or landscapes; and

(b) that is located within one or more of the relevant municipal districts;

relevant municipal district means the municipal districts in any of the following municipal councils—

(a) the Borough of Queenscliffe Council;

(b) the Greater Geelong City Council;

(c) the Macedon Ranges Shire Council;

(d) the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council;

(e) the Yarra Ranges Shire Council.

We also lay out what we think should happen with VC110 with respect to these areas. The view is it is not consistent with these being significant landscapes and areas deserving protection to leave the unbridled intensity of development that comes with VC110 — and it is intended to come by the government. As I say, we will leave aside the debate in metropolitan Melbourne but just ask: is this appropriate? Is a metropolitan instrument appropriate in these sensitive zones? Is it appropriate that it be forced on these communities, as it was in May 2017 by the current government. There was no agreement to this. There was no proper consultation. This came as a bolt from the blue, unwinding the neighbourhood protections in some cases and the general residential protections in other areas.

We have said that those VC110 changes should be suppressed with respect to the areas where these sorts of declarations are made:

Despite anything to the contrary in this Act or in a declared area planning scheme, the amendments —

our proposed amendments —

made to that declared area planning scheme by VPP Amendment VC110 do not apply in relation to a declared area.

That strips that out and leaves it as it was before May 2017. It leaves greater protection than is currently the case. We think that that is an important protection and an important step. None of this is without balancing. Of course we have to work with councils, we have to work with communities and we have to work with those who would seek to develop certain areas. This has got to be harnessed in a sensible way to get the outcomes that are required. Housing more

population? Yes, in a modest way. But we must recognise that the protections must be there to make sure we do not lose what is unique, what is special, what is important and what is distinctive about these municipalities, these areas and these landscapes. These are important protections, and I seek the chamber's support for them.