

Greens in blue over planning

Stephen Taylor
steve@mpnews.com.au

OPPOSITION by the Greens to a parliamentary amendment that would have given the Mornington Peninsula its own planning statement has been described as “so lacking in common sense as to defy belief”.

Peninsula Speaks co-founder Christine Haydon was furious after the Greens backed the Labor state government in opposing a Coalition planning and environment amendment which they believe would have given teeth to attempts to overturn an already implemented 11-metre, three-storey height limits.

The contentious issue was the subject of several township meetings organised by Mornington Peninsula Shire over the past 12 months held to alert the community to the potential heights of “inappropriate development” in residential areas.

Villages and townships said to be under threat include Capel Sound, Rosebud, Dromana, Mt Martha, Mornington, Baxter, Somerville, Tyabb, Hastings and Bittern.

The shire wants the government to reinstate the local planning statement which it believes had protected the “unique” character of the peninsula from inappropriate development since the 1970s.

Last week’s amendment defeat may have put paid to that.

“It was voted down crushing any hope we had of a Localised Planning Statement,” Ms Haydon said.

“As the community are aware we all have been working together to prevent three storeys and other changes to the planning laws that were announced in April last year and, to this end, we presented a petition to parliament with about 11,000 signatures.

“Last week at a second reading in the Legislative Council, Liberal MP David Davis suggested an amendment to the Planning and Environment Amendment (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes) Bill 2017 that would allow the Mornington Peninsula – along with Macedon Ranges, Yarra Ranges and the Bellarine Peninsula – to have localised planning statements instead of being wrapped into the Victoria Planning Scheme.

“Despite all the hard work and effort across the Mornington Peninsula to avoid this disastrous planning situation the Greens, a party for the environment, have chosen to allow the Macedon Ranges only to be included.

“It would appear that the Greens have no concern for the Green Wedge and distinctive areas and landscapes on the peninsula.”

Continued Page 12

Group claims 'blindsided' by the Greens

Continued from Page 3

Ms Haydon said: "They blindsided us. We only had one opportunity and now that's lost."

Mornington Peninsula Greens candidate Paul Saunders admitted to being at first "shocked" by his party's stand on the amendment.

"It seemed strange to me [but] I spoke with the state office [afterwards] and they said they had supported the amendment."

Mr Saunders said he was told Greens MPs were "confident that the amendment would not be needed for the localised planning statement to be successful".

In a statement next day, Mr Saunders said the Greens "voted to prevent regional towns and communities from high densification and inappropriate development, such as the height increase to 11-metres in GRZ [General Residential Zone], in some areas".

He said the Greens had asked the minister to prioritise areas "specifically including the Mornington Peninsula".

"The Greens voted down the Liberal amendment to ensure current protection offered by the Local Planning Statement for the Mornington Peninsula is maintained," he said.

"The Greens were assured in Parliament by [Labor MLC for Southern Metropolitan Region and Small Business Minister] Philip Dalidakis that "the localised planning statement will sit above, so it will then inform those processes beneath it, and, obviously it filters down from there".

Mr Saunders said the Greens had “specifically requested the minister [to] recognise the Mornington Peninsula as a distinctive area under the current bill which has bipartisan support”.

Mornington Peninsula Greens candidate Paul Saunders admitted to being at first “shocked” by his party’s stand on the amendment. “I’m being straight with you,” he said. “It seemed strange to me [but] I spoke with the state office [afterwards] and they said they had supported the amendment.”

Mr Saunders said he was told Greens MPs were “confident that the amendment would not be needed for the localised planning statement to be successful”.

In a statement next day, Mr Saunders said the Greens “voted to prevent regional towns and communities from high densification and inappropriate development, such as the height increase to 11-metres in GRZ, in some areas”.

He said the Greens had asked the minister to prioritise areas “specifically including the Mornington peninsula”.

“The Greens voted down the Liberal amendment to ensure current protection offered by the Local Planning Statement for the Mornington Peninsula is maintained,” he said.

“The Greens were assured in Parliament by [MLC for Southern Metropolitan Region and Small Business Minister] Philip Dalidakis that “the localised planning statement will sit above, so it will then inform those processes beneath it, and, obviously it filters down from there”.

Mr Saunders said the Greens had “specifically requested the minister [to] recognise the Mornington Peninsula as a distinctive area under the current bill which has bipartisan support”.