

Notice of Motion - Neil Manning

That Council:

1. Immediately organises a public meeting in Woodend in response to the recent direction of the Department of Planning and Community Development, requiring Macedon Ranges Council to change the draft Settlement Strategy for Woodend to expand the town through 'greenfields' rezoning of farmland and substantially increase population growth over the exhibited low growth scenario.
2. Demands that Damian Kennedy, the DPCD officer responsible for the correspondence, or more senior officers, address the public meeting and explain to the people the reasoning and events leading up to the department's direction.
3. Organises a plebiscite of the people of Woodend to determine what level of community support exists for:
 - a) the low growth scenario and no further residential rezoning in the exhibited draft Settlement Strategy, or alternatively
 - b) expansion of the town beyond its current boundary through 'greenfields' rezoning of surrounding farming and rural zones, and higher population growth.
4. Immediately writes to the Minister for Planning requesting clarification of the government's and department's position, and a clear policy direction for the Settlement Strategy, and Woodend.

Background

Recent correspondence from an officer in the Department of Planning and Community Development has expressed a requirement for the recently exhibited Settlement Strategy to be changed to include higher population growth, and new 'greenfields' rezoning for residential growth, for Woodend.

The strong inference is that any subsequent amendment to the planning scheme will not gain departmental support or Ministerial approval unless the department's higher growth scenario for Woodend is adopted by Council.

This would be a major change from the low growth scenario Council adopted for Woodend in the exhibited Strategy, which allows for some growth in the town.

Hundreds of submissions were received from Woodend residents expressing their support of a low growth scenario that entailed no additional rezoning of land. That scenario made sense, and responded to the very high fire risk and constraints of heritage character, tourism qualities, environment, vegetation and flooding issues in Woodend.

It is a Council's right to determine strategic planning direction, and respond to its community. If the Department of Planning and Community Development wants to impose something else on Council, then it must take responsibility for its decisions. The department must come here and explain itself fully and properly to the people of Woodend.