

MARRA – Problems with Draft Macedon Ranges Settlement Strategy

Comments provided to Council 12 July, 2011.

Some of the big issues are:

- There are conflicts within the document because some related parts have changed while others have not. For example, a reference at P73 to potential for RLZ intensification at Gisborne has been taken out but it still remains in the Gisborne Township Assessment. Likewise all references to needing more lots (rezoning) at Riddell have been taken out of the Township Assessment, but a new section at Implementation includes Greenfields rezoning for the town.
- Take out all references to more/more intensive Rural Living (Gisborne and Romsey) in the relevant Township Assessments – there is no justification whatsoever for this. It is pre-emptive and fosters speculation. Any such proposals need to be tested against community consultation and Minister's Direction No. 6 and State policy – that hasn't happened.
- There is increased emphasis on the Brumby government's South Loddon Regional Strategy – this document was not exhibited and delivers the previous government's policy, not the current government's.
- The new references to Clarkefield and its inclusion in the Urban Growth Boundary are reprehensible, and will drive intense speculation. Who said this should happen at Clarkefield? No consultation. The Urban Growth Boundary is a matter for the Minister for Planning. Delete new references to this.
- Changes for Woodend are unjustified, contrary to community wishes and favour a development proposal. Delete all references to higher growth and rezoning.
- Growth levels at Riddells Creek cannot be justified, and appear to be part of a plan linking Clarkefield, Riddell and Gisborne, and potentially including all within the metro area. Growth at Riddell could be reduced to +1,400, with a total population of 4,900 in 2036, which using the consultant's figures would use existing land supply, with no rezoning required. This growth level would be just over the Regional AAGR of 1.1%.
- At Gisborne, the additional 1,350 people added for Rural Living areas should be deducted, leaving the town with growth as per the ODP.
- Adjust Table 1 to show reductions in growth for Gisborne, Riddell and Woodend.
- An additional statement should be included in the Strategy identifying the 'churn' rate, and what that means in terms of allowing new residents to come into the shire without needing new housing development.
- All Township Assessments should include information on existing lot supply (including both the high and low end of the range identified), and the lot requirement for 2036 population.
- Also missing from Township Assessments are reliable details of business and industrial land requirements. A reference to Appendix 3 should be included for all towns.
- Even suggesting rezoning RCZ for commercial purposes at Mt. Macedon is fraught with danger. Zones which would replace RCZ would allow use and development not compatible with the area. If there is concern about existing businesses, go for a Ministerial amendment, but take the broad statements of intent in the Strategy out.
- An additional statement should be included in the Settlement Strategy, identifying the State government's intent to reinstate Statement of Planning Policy No. 8 as State policy in 2011, that the Settlement Strategy was prepared with SPP8 as local policy, and that implementation of the Settlement Strategy must be in the context of SPP8's new State policy status.