

June 2021

Dear Councillors and Planners for the City of Greater Geelong

I am writing to you regarding Amendment C363, which rezones land in the Clifton Springs, Drysdale and Curlewis areas from Rural living to Residential.

Many years ago, when I was on the Clifton Springs Foreshore Committee we were shown drawings of future housing development on the Bellarine Peninsula with large 'green belts' in between. We were promised large 'green belts' in between large areas of housing. And they were to be substantial – the size of the latest rezoning of land bounded by Wyndham Street, Jetty Road and Central Road. This is just not happening. Green belts provide us with fresh air, beautiful vistas, areas for leisure and habitat for animals and birds. The size of new building blocks don't allow for lovely lush gardens and certainly don't encourage the growing of trees. There is no room for a tree, not even a small one on many of these blocks. In fact they are often sharing a wall in between the houses.

In the age of climate change what are we doing? Haven't we learnt anything about the need to retain large areas of forest and natural environments? It is appalling to see these tiny blocks of land with their little hot box houses all using masses of electricity to cool and heat their homes. Have we not heard of solar and wind power. Trees cool down our air naturally and provide shade and protection for all life. There are examples of villages in Victoria where they are independent and 'off grid.' Now wouldn't that be an exemplary thing to do. How about setting an example and using these wise and thoughtful examples of the way of the future instead of turning our backs on it for the sake of a few developers becoming more and more wealthy. I find it embarrassing to show people around Clifton Springs and Drysdale with all the new ugly development going on. It may very well backfire one day and be so unsightly that people just don't want to live here. The people who live here now are the people who care about our environment going into the future for our children and grandchildren. We don't want to leave – we live here because we love the country feel it currently has.

Let's be a proactive Geelong community and support each other – the people making these decisions don't live here and don't understand. If it was their home and environment being degraded that would be a different story. We need people to look out for us and be our voice.

We watch with horror as our beautiful trees and green belts around Drysdale, Curlewis and Clifton Springs just disappear. The council may wish to develop many areas but the commitment to planting many trees and shrubs to support our wild life and give us our fresh oxygen is just not there. Hollow promises are made about planting and beautifying these areas but the reality is different. The volume of planting is just not enough. Houses are built too close to each other. Someone makes a lot of money while the majority of us remain powerless and just have to 'put up'.

There are many old trees along Jetty Road that will be killed. It breaks our hearts to see these ancient trees lying there with their limbs and trunks chopped up. They are alive - we need them. They provide habitat, they are a real, living part of our lives. Many species of parrots rely on OLD trees for hollows to nest in. It is not fair to the people who live on this land to be forced into these changes when it is not what they want and not what most of the locals want. Council listens to the wealthy developers and not the people who live there now. We MUST retain substantial green belts in our towns and villages.

Like so many other people I am cynical about anyone really listening or reading our comments and taking them seriously. We just have to take a look around us at the little boxes that line our streets now with no yards and no room to plant trees. Parks are small with very few trees. These are hot boxes that chew up electricity and are environmentally unfriendly. Look at what people have done on their bigger blocks - many trees and open green spaces for wildlife and children to play, places to grow food and live off the grid. We need these bigger blocks to balance the tiny housing blocks that developers somehow get approval to build. If you asked the populations in these areas about what they think everyone would be in favour of more sensible choices.

I implore you to keep the green belts that we currently have today and fight for our futures. We need a mixture of land sizes and need people who are working their land for the benefit of our planet. People should be able to have a choice as to whether they stay on their land without these outside pressures that eventually force them to sell up. This breaks their hearts and they have to live with it for the rest of their lives. There is a feeling of helplessness and a lack of control that can affect people deeply.

If there is to be development it should be for bigger blocks that provide enough room around them to plant trees, for people to have veggie gardens and some animals - that is the way for the future. Our children want this. You just have to see the protests that are going on all over the world now by younger people. They don't want to see this kind of development and bullying especially when the land use is environmentally friendly and provides green belts in towns and cities. We must move into the thinking of the future and change the way we develop our towns. It can be done but needs open and creative minds to come up with better solutions.

What will we say to our children who are currently at Clifton Springs Primary School enjoying the lovely environments that we still have. 'Well sorry - we did try to save the open green spaces for you but our pleading fell on deaf ears'.

Geelong is going down the path of no return and we here in Drysdale/Clifton Springs are being asked to get on the same band wagon and accept being forced into a situation that we just don't want. How cruel that the council is so inflexible that it approves the demolition of a lovely home (164 Wyndham Street) situated in a glorious forest of trees, just to build a drain! There must be other options! This owners are dedicated to the environment, they grow their own food. What a horrendous experience for them and their families.

Geelong/Drysdale/Clifton Springs/Curlewis need to be examples of how clever development can take place. Show the world how it can be done before it is too late. Do we really want to be a power sucking city, living in hot boxes, and not contributing to changing the way we do things?

The people living in these green belts are the ones who are helping us to save planet earth so leave them be. We need them. They are committed to stopping the earth heating up through climate change. Forcing them out of their homes so that little tiny blocks can be sectioned up is morally wrong.

Haven't we learnt anything from the architect Robin Boyd who wrote the book called 'The Australian Ugliness' in the 1960s? He talked about the suburban creep – and here it is happening now on the Beautiful Bellarine Peninsula right before our eyes. We must have larger blocks. We must have room to grow a variety of plants and trees. We need to have the choice to grow our own vegies, to choose to eat the food we grow as a basic human right. Children need open space and fresh air to thrive.

We want you to listen to the voice of the majority to be fair and humane.

Yours sincerely,

Clifton Springs Resident