

**The draft PLAN FOR GREATER ADELAIDE
SUBMISSION COVER SHEET**

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Level 5, 136 North Tce, ADELAIDE

Submissions Close 30 September 2009

Name: _____ Mt Barker and District Residents' Association Inc _____
Organisation (if appropriate): _____
Principal contact: _____ Mr Laurie Gellon _____
Position: _____ Chairperson _____
Address: _____ PO Box 494 _____
Suburb/City: _____ Mt Barker, 5251 _____
Telephone: _____
Mobile: _____ c/o _____ 0412 417774 _____
Email address: _____ dianne.vaneck@dvesolutions.com.au _____

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Mt Barker & District Residents' Association Inc

PO Box 494 Mount Barker, South Australia 5251

For the Community

INTRODUCTION

The Mt Barker and District Residents' Association appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Government's 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide (The Plan). It commends the Minister on taking a proactive, strategic approach to planning for the future of the city and close environs, and in particular the region including Mt Barker, Littlehampton and Nairne. Clearly considerable research and modelling has been undertaken, as indicated by the significant amount of information in the Background Technical document and the The Plan itself.

After having studied The Plan with great care and consulting our members our overall view is that there are several key principles which underpin this document, together with draft strategies and targets, which are not consistent throughout The Plan. These strategies are often in conflict with leading academic schools of thought, illogical and, as a result, extremely alarming. We believe more careful analysis of the statistics underpinning these documents is required to ensure the modelling is reliable and valid.

The Association will address its concerns within The Plan's key guiding principles as noted on page 14 of The Plan. Although some of the guiding principles can be considered as 'motherhood' statements there is some indication that they may provide a positive way forward for this state.

We emphasise the need, however, to take a **triple bottom line approach** to planning and development in this state. This Plan, in the main, takes a housing and development centric approach, based on a vague premise that the population must increase. We question this premise. It addresses many material aspects (land use, housing) but it has not addressed intangibles well enough to provide a 'balanced scorecard' (impact on culture of region; integration of people into the district; social services). There is a need to recognise that the qualitative issues are far more important than the quantitative issues.

Some fundamental questions about the information in The Plan will be raised throughout our response. It is clear in The Plan, and the correspondence from the Minister to our Council, that the developers have had first contact with the Government before the Council has been able to discuss or negotiate anything around the land use and town boundary.

The lack of genuine public consultation is appalling for such a critical and forward thinking plan. The Plan, by proposing to double the built footprint of Mount Barker fails to recognise its unprecedented growth over the last decade. From less than 8,000 residents in the early 1980s to 29,000 district wide now (27,600 in 2006, DC of Mt. Barker), although a gradual and planned growth, Mount Barker is now struggling on any number of fronts as a result.

The Plan proposes a radical extension of the town boundaries, which will result in urban sprawl. Where does it stop? We suggest the Minister should consider infill rather than green fill and on this issue we support this stance of our local Council. The existing urban boundary can contain many more households and people and during the Residential PAR consultations and planning from 2003 – 2006 this infill of existing boundaries was established. But The Plan now suggests a massive oversupply of land to cater for the Government's own planning targets. We question the logic of this. We believe that a sounder approach would be for the town to grow up rather than out.

It is anticipated in The Plan that Mt Barker growth will increase by almost double within 15 years, rather than the 30 years promoted by The Plan. Why halve the development time when the rest of the State is considered within a thirty year timeframe? We suspect that this may be simply Phase 1 of a further urban expansion plan that the Minister is yet to inform the community about. We believe this is unsustainable urban expansion by stealth. How undemocratic can this Government become in such a short time frame.

Timing and limited consultation

We believe that the time allowed for reviewing this major piece of work, only three months for the affected communities to consider a sensible response, shows an indifference to the value placed on both community and Council feedback. Our local Council has expended considerable resources during the past three months to determine whether The Plan is truly viable. It has tested the assumptions in great detail. Eight staff from three departments working full time on their response is an indication that the Council is seriously concerned about The Plan. We support their stance that this Plan is flawed in many areas, particularly around statistical evidence for land use, loss of agricultural lands and lack of infrastructure funding and support.

The Council's substantial response will show that the Government (under advice from Minister Holloway) has over-calculated growth lands, underestimated resources and funding availability in this community. It was indeed the very same Minister who in a local public forum in 2006 indicated to community members that *'there would be no growth in Mt Barker on my watch'*. What hollow words, Minister Holloway! The Minister has slowly come to terms with consultation requirements with affected Councils, but has still ignored their communities. There is no summary of Council's feedback in the draft Plan even though consultation with Councils commenced earlier this year. The Government will decide the future sprawl and it appears that Council will have no control over this. Our 3rd tier of government is reduced to rates, rubbish and roads once more.

Key principles

The Association supports the development of 12 key principles as the foundation for The Plan. However, it is unfortunate that throughout the document these principles have not been adhered to, particularly in the Adelaide Hills section of the document. Our response will largely address the issues and concerns of our community with regards the areas of Mt Barker, Littlehampton and Nairne.

Our response has been structured under the corresponding *Draft Policies and Targets* headings used in The Plan which are relevant to the Mt Barker area.

D4 POPULATION and D9 THE ECONOMY AND JOBS

The Plan is based almost solely on a single premise – that population must increase and that this increase is required to ensure ongoing future economic development for this state. Yet this position is never justified in the document. We consider that it would be in the interests of the Government, with elections approaching and the general belief that the process is being driven by developers' interests rather than the common good, for the Minister to present the facts and statistics about the likely and desirable future population of the State.

The premise seems to be extremely flawed. Your own academic contributor to the Population Working group, Professor Graham Hugo, a leading academic based at Adelaide University, finds fault in your hypothesis. This Association, having heard a recent presentation by the Professor, thus seeks statistical justification for the Government's position on population growth. We understand that the Population Advisory Group has not met for two years so where have the statistics to justify an increase in our population come from? If Prof Hugo believes the figures are '*plucked from the air*' where does the government source the half million figure from?

We also understand that these figures are based on 2001, not 2006 Census figures. Our District has had an average of 3% growth per year and our community and Council has serious difficulty dealing with that growth due to serious infrastructure and other constraints. This Plan now suggests between 10 – 12% growth per annum. This is nonsensical without the appropriate infrastructure and services to support such growth.

We question the wisdom of relying solely on increasing the population by 'importing' workers. Further we question the ethics of importing trained people from the third and/or developing worlds, where they are needed at least as much as they are here. Is it ethical to take from these countries those in whom they have invested their scarce resources to train? We submit that, instead of doing this, we should concentrate on training our own presently under-educated and, therefore, under-employed youth to fulfil the role of caring for our aging population in the future. It may not be an unreasonable thing to say that, instead of having a planning problem, we have an education one. Thus, to import people from overseas whilst our own youth suffer from unemployment and social isolation becomes politically irresponsible.

Again further, along these lines, has the Government considered the effects of an additional half a million people on our social structure? We need hard evidence that consideration has occurred before allowing such a considerable influx of people trained overseas. There is no need to panic. The 'baby boomer' cohort will pass through anyway. The tens of thousands of middle aged immigrants already here will only delay and extend the effect of that bubble.

The birth rate (ABS, 2006) is well below replacement level. With current immigration we are far above replacement level. Prof Graeme (2008) shows how these have been used by the state of South Australia to more than treble its immigrant intake as part of its economic development strategy. Hugo (op cit) now claims immigrant intake has almost quadrupled!

Clive Hamilton (2003) describes economic growth as pathological and says the obsession with economic growth for its own sake is merely '*growth fetishism*'. '*Economic growth does not create happiness, unhappiness sustains economic growth*' (Hamilton, 2003, p220). If growth was a reliable measure of wealth, India would rule the world! The fact that this is not so, gives just cause to question the real costs of growth.

Globally there is sufficient evidence that indicates population increase does not automatically equate to economic growth and/or prosperity. In fact there is world wide evidence to the contrary, hence China and India attempts to now curb growth. Why also do we advise developing countries they must reduce population growth? The United States is now trying to slow their two million per annum increase with government led programs. Switzerland and Scandinavia have high prosperity but no population growth (Hugo, 2009). Some countries have a deliberate 'no growth' policy (Germany) and are moving towards higher quality living/production and a steady-state economy. We believe such a strategy is more appropriate for the Greater Adelaide region, and the Mt Barker District in particular.

Lawn (2008) found that South Australia was at its most prosperous in a long period of relatively low growth and Lawn and Clarke (2006) found that the GDP was a false measure of welfare since it did not count the cost of non-renewable resource depletion. It also did not differentiate between economic activity generated in war or peace, community effort or natural disasters. In applying the Genuine Progress Indicator they found growth to have long term negative consequences not captured in short term economic data.

More specifically there has been no 'new employment' areas set aside in Mt Barker. Yet the Plan calls for 9,000 new jobs. Currently, there are limited employment opportunities in Mt Barker. Our youth struggle to find local employment that will develop career paths for them. Most residents commute to the city for work (ABS, 2006).

In The Plan the economic modelling suggests that manufacturing will grow by \$9.3 billion and increase by 50,000 workers. How is this expected to happen when in SA over past 18 years manufacturing output only grew by 0.7% (Blandy, 2009). Over the past five years, manufacturing output has fallen, and employed persons have decreased by nearly 30,000 persons (Blandy, 2009). Manufacturing is not the jobs growth focus for our children's futures. Read the newspapers on a daily basis to see how many manufacturing companies have gone into receivership, closed their doors or moved their operations to offshore, in particular to China. Are their jobs for our communities in China? We think not.

We suggest that the Hills region should be promoted as an Education Centre of Excellence (ECE). There are already nine education institutions located here now. A tertiary education provider has also shown some interest in locating a campus here. This provides the Government and the Council, as well as the community with a substantial targeted opportunity for economic -growth as well as tourism. This would mirror the City of Adelaide's target strategy. Consider the potential if international students were to locate here to study at secondary or tertiary providers, including university and/or TAFE? The financial, cultural and economic benefits would be similar, albeit on a smaller scale, to those found in other educational centres around the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Minister:

- 1. Publish the evidence for insisting on a radical increase of the state's population by migration.**
- 2. Revise education policies to ensure that all the available workforce in the state is trained to fulfil the future needs of the population before we poach trained personnel from the third world.**
- 3. Consider how to increase employment opportunities in the Hills area before planning to increase the population.**
- 4. Consider developing and promoting the region as education centric.**

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Plan proposes the replacement of Mt Barker's Regional Centre status with a Major District Centre status. We question the reasoning for this change? Will this affect infrastructure resourcing and support? Will government services and resources be reduced to this area? These services are required to provide employment to our community. Where is the Government's rationale for this variation of centre status?

Waste water management is a critical issue in terms of any future growth planning. The local STEDS system is insufficient for current population and needs extension. How will this be funded for an additional 29,000 residents? The proposed exponential growth of the population gives no recognition of this problem. Much of the underground infrastructure within these three towns was built in the 1970s and is now aging and ready for replacement. How can the Council fund this replacement as well as carry the burden of new systems and structures?

Recently the Council purchased land in the region of Springs Road (outside the town boundary) in order to build further water storage as there was limited capacity to build this within the current boundary. This purchase of a piece of \$5million dollar real estate increases the debt level of Council, and its community. Ultimately the community has to pay for infrastructure, either through direct levies or via increased rates. Neither is well accepted without evidence of clear value for money. Our Council's submission provides extensive detail on the infrastructure issues. It notes *'The Plan is deficient in articulating infrastructure provision and funding responsibilities, which impacts upon the confidence of delivering sustainable outcomes'* (DCMB, 2009).

Further to this, recreational infrastructure is sadly lacking. A 33 and a third yard swimming pool built by public donation in 1957 is insufficient for the existing 29,000 of the district, let alone double that figure. The town's main oval suffers from water issues, and even though new plans are in train for two new ovals on the outskirts of the township, these proposals are yet to be planned for funding or use.

It appears that Council has used statistics of an anticipated increase of 12.5 % per annum (cumulative) in the wine industry and a 33% increase in the bluegum trade to justify both the Mt. Barker 'Ring Route' and the new freeway exit from Bald Hills Road. Neither of these industry projections seems feasible considering their huge costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Minister:

- 1. Develops the existing STEDS service to cover future growth in Mount Barker and Littlehampton.**
- 2. Build a storage facility for the treated water and a purple pipe reticulation system for the use of horticulture and industry.**

D1 CREATING NEW TRANSIT CORRIDORS, GROWTH AREAS, TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENTS CENTRES and D10 TRANSPORT

The Plan calls for the development of TODs which appear, in principle, to be a sensible option for transport management linked to urban development. However, surprisingly, there is no consideration of a TOD for the Mt Barker region. The Plan does not apply its own principles to our region.

TODs are viable for rail (especially fast electric trains) and the most advanced nations in the developed world are now phasing out freeways and reducing motor vehicle dependence (Forster, 2004, 188-189, Newman et al 2009, pp 91, 102, 103-105.) In an oil constrained future why build further dependence on roads and highways? We believe there could be a rail service included in The Plan to ensure more efficient and environmentally sustainable transport to and from the city.

We believe the Hills community already has an overreliance on the motor car. Public transport patronage is good but the service is often unreliable with patchy service to outlying areas. Consequently commuters choose to use their own motor vehicles to facilitate their travels. If there is no corresponding increase of public transport service to new outlying areas, they will fast become dormitory suburbs, ideal breeding grounds for disaffected youth and unemployed residents.

In the new proposed urban extensions there is very little commentary made about how these new inhabitants will travel to work, particularly when that work is in the city. There are opportunities in the Hills to develop transit corridors with housing a few metres within transit hubs. We suggest the use of a light rail development in place of the Ring Route suggested by council and noted in The Plan. Not only would a light rail network alleviate the carving up of further agricultural land, but it would also contribute to the reduction of green house gases and carbon emissions.

Traffic to and from the city to the Hills is a serious issue. Currently the South Eastern freeway is extremely busy in peak hours, less so in non peak times. However the main problem lies in the lack of capacity of Glen Osmond Road, and to some extent Cross, Fullarton, Greenhill, Unley and King William Roads, to manage the peak hour traffic to and from the Hills. By increasing the population in the Hills without increasing opportunities for local jobs, the assumption must be held that those residents will travel to the city for work. This is supported by the 2006 Census data. But, once that traffic enters the main Glen Osmond intersection, the delays to the city centre are lengthy and become extremely congested during peak hours.

How is it anticipated that the South Eastern Freeway system will cope in 20 years with another 40,000 people trying to get to work on it? In 30 years a potential 50 – 60,000 commuters will be trying to use it if the current plans are implemented. How will it be repaired? Improved? Recent delays when sections were under repair for more than two months necessitated delays of half an hour or more. With increased use these repairs and delays will be more frequent. During these delays access by police and ambulance is almost impossible. Also consider the serious consequences for bushfire management and township evacuations. A prime example occurred just this weekend (27 Sept 2009) when the Freeway

was blocked in both directions. A stolen car crashed in the down-lane and the Bay to Birdwood clogged the up-lane. No traffic could pass through. The deliberate placement of commuters around freeway interchanges is now an outmoded and wasteful process. Why initiate such a system which in enlightened, resilient cities is currently being phased out?

Another issue is the lack of an additional access point to and from the Freeway from the three towns. The Mt Barker Council has argued and lobbied strongly for several years for the need to have an additional interchange on the eastern side of Mt Barker. This is required, in Council's opinion, to provide access to and from the Freeway for Nairne residents, as well as the new inhabitants in the southern and eastern areas and those travelling from Strathalbyn, Milang and Clayton. Mt Barker is a cul de sac in one sense. It only has one entrance and exit for the city bound commuters. It is also a 'through' town for those commuters from Strathalbyn, Milang and even Clayton. Thus not only is the local traffic situation becoming difficult to manage, the additional 'through' traffic is adding to the Council's traffic dilemma.

We understand that \$29 million for an additional ramp to provide access to a few thousand commuters is not the best value of taxpayers's money. We also argue that better transport management planning within and around the towns when the current new developments were approved would have been eminently more sensible. However, the situation is now at such an extreme that an additional exit/entrance onto the freeway is required.

The release of the Council's recent Transport Master Plan (TMP) does little to alleviate this situation. The TMP suggests a southern Ring Route be built around the township to cater for this 'through' traffic as well as the traffic created from the current new developments. Again, this strategy is flawed as commuters will always take the shortest most direct route to their destination.

It was noted several years ago by QED traffic consultants (DCMB, 2003a) that commuters will not travel backwards to go forwards. Thus commuters may take the ring route in an easterly direction to gain access to a freeway access point that is 5 – 6 kilometers further way from a shorter route – or they may not. If they choose to take the shorter route (via Flaxley Road and Wellington Road – the current route) they will only ensure more traffic congestion and time delays at certain peak times of the day. Thus the idea of a ring route easing the traffic problems is short sighted and needs far more consultation with the community.

In addition to this, Council's consultants have indicated said ring route would cost in the vicinity of \$54 – \$70 million excluding land purchases. This, together with a further \$20 million if land acquisition is required at residential land value rates is completely unacceptable to this community. Who will pay for this? Our council does not have the funding for these amounts of capital infrastructure development. Rates are already high (cents/dollar value) compared to the city ratepayers. They cannot go any higher in the current economic climate.

Thus to keep the traffic off the now congested roads public transport needs to be developed and promoted further. As there is no rail service and the bus service is under patronised, what else is there? The current Park 'N' Ride was filled to capacity the day after it opened. There is no where else to park in the township, nor in Nairne or Littlehampton if a resident wishes to

travel by bus to the city. Thus more planning for Park 'N Rides is required, both in Mt Barker and the other townships. This has not been included in The Plan either.

Overall The Plan takes an extremely myopic view to transport and traffic management in our region. The Plan has the opportunity to be innovative, green and commuter friendly but instead returns to the age old pollutant – cars on roads.

Our suggestion is to build a light rail commuter system to include the four kilometers from the urban boundary to the current Park 'N' Ride. This would provide for a connection point every 800 metres. Housing could be build in medium density clusters around these connection points. We believe this is how one of the principles of The Plan could be incorporated in our region. Not only would it provide clean, green transport options for residents in new outer areas, but it would reduce the amount of traffic on our already congested roads and avoid the unnecessary expense of a Ring Route around the southern areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Minister:

- 1. Plan to develop TODs in the Hills based on existing towns and townships and utilising electrified rail transport within those townships.**
- 2. Create a second outlet for motor traffic from Mount Barker to the SE Freeway.**
- 3. Establish more Park'n' Ride facilities in the Hills.**
- 4. Provide a fast rail passenger service and a rail freight service from Nairne to Adelaide.**

AGRICULTURE

High quality agricultural land has been marked out for intensive residential development on the basis of where opportunistic developers have already purchased or possibly have acquired options to purchase, rather than the food producing potential of that land. It is highly relevant that maps obtained from PIRSA (2004 and 2008) and the University of Adelaide all indicate that land marked on The Plan for development is the best agricultural and horticultural land remaining in the vicinity of Mount Barker.

Hillary Clinton stated (Advertiser 28 Sept 2009) that there is a world food shortage due to the economy and climate change. Why would we add to this situation by destroying the very thing that makes our area rich and sustainable? These lands are market garden lands, useful for small and large scale agriculture. PIRSA soil maps (2008) show an abundance of quality soil in the majority of the proposed growth areas.

PIRSA states (2008) that the following lands in the Greater Adelaide Region are used for agriculture:

- i. 25% of total agriculture from the state comes from the Greater Adelaide Region
- ii. 85% vegetables
- iii. 30% fruit
- iv. 40% wine
- v. 40% Dairy/milk

The current urban expansion has already taken a great deal of this land. For more high quality agricultural land to be taken for housing is both irresponsible and negligent. The land adjacent to Bollen Road (currently grazed by the Herbig family) is Class 2 and 3 land, as is the land adjacent to Fiedler Lane where the current strawberry farm is located. This land is extremely rare and valuable and should be retained at all costs. The land used for potato growing in the district is valuable for its ability to provide a natural fertility back to the soil as there is low soil erosion and therefore more sustainable land use. The dollar returns on these annual crops are around \$10,000 per hectare per crop. As three crops per year can be grown (for some vegetables including brussel sprouts and lettuce) there can be easily a high income created for smart farmers. That is, the land classified Class 1, 2 and 3 and should be protected for future generations for food production.

It is further noteworthy that the Samwell land on the eastern side of Bald Hills Road is rated only Class 3 for market gardening (although prime for vines) while land east and south of Mt. Barker is rated Class 1 for market gardening, horticulture or perennial pasture (PIRSA, 2008), but has been marked for intensive housing development. The ambiguity regarding some areas may be due to basing assessment of land productivity on its use at the time. We ask the Minister to revisit this land reconstruction and consider the longer term issues of food scarcity, price rises and loss of export income.

A closer study of all these maps reveals that a large area of high quality agricultural land has already been covered by built development, despite the quality and food production potential of the land having been appraised, (e.g. Land Unit No. 27 east of Junction Road, Balhannah

and Units 17 and 20 among others to the south and south-west of Mt. Barker). Further encroachment into this land is once again irresponsible. This area has seen the greatest increase in agricultural growth in the last six years, where all other regions have been stable (PIRSA, 2008). The loss of over 2,000 hectares of prime agricultural land – was the CREAM BOWL of the state and part of an important food source is extremely irresponsible.

The PIRSA report (2008) clearly states that it is intended to assist formulation of land use policy by State and Local Government. The report further states that in considering special measures for rural-urban interface areas, councils should avoid putting the onus for mitigating environmental effects, such as noise, odour, visual impact, dust and spray drift, wholly on primary producers. PIRSA further states that rural landholders already have duty of care obligations under various statutes, and that simple (planning) design requirements and buffers to minimize the likelihood of disputes with adjoining rural land, urban and rural residential zones are recommended to ensure the burden of responsibility for mitigating these environmental effects is more equitably shared.

Nowhere are these planning recommendations apparent in practice in our district. No permanent buffers or lines exist. The only temporary “buffer” appears to be land zoned “rural living” or the like, which very frequently becomes degraded agricultural land and eventually residential. The negative consequences of inadequate buffer zones on the residents in adjoining developments have already been experienced in our district, to the detriment of businesses, residents and council.

The iconic Howard’s vineyard on Bald Hills Road is under threat if an additional parcel of land is added to the current Nairne town boundary. As a 300 metre buffer zone is required and as such there would be minimal land left for housing on this plot. Those nearby residents would be subject to spray drift, farming noise and heavy transport increases. And again this land in Nairne is prime agricultural land. Why not grow further crops here, and maintain the green zone between Nairne and Blakiston before the town are all merged to form one giant conglomerate of housing.

The futile process of land loss is then repeated with rezoning of more rural land. There has been no attempt to identify and protect good agricultural land in reliable rainfall areas. This could easily have been achieved during the water prescription process, since the Eastern Mount Lofty Watershed was prescribed years ago, with the Western Lofties Watershed nearing completion now.

The PIRSA land assessments provide an *‘informed starting point for considering rezoning options, however PIRSA would still expect to be consulted about any actual rezoning proposals that may eventuate’* (PIRSA, 2008). PIRSA encourages all councils to pay special attention to potential land use conflict problems when developing land use policy for the edge of townships. Problems are usually most pronounced where intensive production systems are involved, but even broadacre farming systems can generate negative environmental effects for neighbours (PIRSA, 2004).

One quite disturbing element of the land marked for residential development is that this has occurred based on a feeding frenzy of speculation by developers and an assumption that if land is 'only being grazed' that is all it can do. Land in this area has changed use over time, as the wheat headlands on some of the steepest pieces of property (created by horse and plough) readily testify.

The Government appears to be somewhat (dangerously) looking only to intensive farming areas such as those Minister Holloway has recently mentioned including McLaren Vale, Virginia and the Barossa Valley. Not only is this poor risk management as regards future dependence on rainfall, underground aquifers and soil fertility, structure and resilience, but it ignores the hazards of intensive agriculture with need for more chemicals, artificial fertilizer and water inputs and consequent pollution and waste creation.

The Fleurieu has an established Farmers' Market and boutique label for its produce. This region has been working towards similar goals and, just as it is within sight of these goals the government heavily handedly decided to impose dense housing development on the best land close to Mt. Barker. Tori Morton, who serves on the Premier's Food Council (Deputy Chair), the Southern Economic Development Board and is heavily involved in the Fleurieu Peninsula The Slow Food Group said *'I cannot emphasize enough the need to preserve good land'* (PIA Conference, 21 August 2009). This statement was repeated by Pip Forrester (Tourism) speaking at the same conference about the making of place. She cited Nappa Valley and Tuscany and said that *'we must protect our peri urban lands for food production – once good food producing land is covered with bricks and concrete it is too late'*.

The food producing potential of the fertile Adelaide Plains (a result of the Flood plain of six creeks) has been completely destroyed by residential development. Yet the Government now seeks to do precisely the same thing in the nearest market garden and food bowl to Adelaide – the Adelaide Hills and Mount Barker. This area will be vital in the future located, as it is, on both major highway and rail routes between Melbourne and Adelaide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Minister:

- 1. Excludes all viable agricultural land in the district from housing development.**
- 2. Encourages and supports sustainable agricultural and farming practices in the region.**

ENVIRONMENTAL including D14 CLIMATE CHANGE and D12 BIODIVERSITY

The Plan (p128) states that it is intended to retain 13% of existing natural areas (identified as areas of high environmental significance). This is hardly good news, since around 90% of the State's indigenous flora and fauna biodiversity lives in the Mount Lofty Ranges (Greater Adelaide area) and the area of habitat remaining is now less than 13%. This means that the Government has not set aside any additional habitat despite the unprecedented rate of extinction of plant, animal and bird species currently underway in this region. In the Mt. Barker area remaining habitat is down to 3%, most of which is contained in remnant vegetation in an environmentally fragile area on Mount Barker Summit. No other areas have been set aside, nor suggestions made to do so.

The entire length of Mount Barker (Purtinga) Creek from the town centre to Mount Barker Springs, together with the Creek's natural floodplain, should be set aside for conservation and walking/cycling trails. This is one of few remaining examples in Australia of a natural 'chain of ponds' ecosystem system and should be revegetated where damaged by clearing and recent channelizing (in Mt. Barker) and has potential as an iconic ephemeral wetland walking trail tourist destination. By restoring this eco-system rather than denuding it a seasonal migratory bird stopover would be provided to value-add to the Laratinga Wetland and complement government backed wetland restoration on the Fleurieu Peninsula to support endangered water birds and riparian species.

Over 1000 species of all the terrestrial vascular plants and vertebrate animals in South Australia are considered to be threatened – 63% of the State's mammals and 22% of the State's vascular plants are formally listed as threatened (Dept. WLBC, 2005) and the Mt. Lofty Ranges is a federally listed hotspot for biodiversity loss (S.A. Govt. 2005).

This makes the strongest case for urban infill and preservation of lands both for agriculture and as potential habitat restoration areas under heritage conservation agreements. Once the land is covered with built development there is no turning back. Some icon bird species are found in the Mount Barker district, among them The Superb Blue Wren, the Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoo, the Wedge-Tailed Eagle (increasingly rare here now), Buff-banded Landrail, the Crake, the Blue Heron, Honeyeater species, Owl species (Masked, Boobook, Barn and rare Barking Owl).

RECOMMEDATIONS

That the Minister:

- 1. Consider the many environmental issues before finalising The Plan.**
- 2. Liaise with the Government's agencies, particularly the Dept of Environment and Heritage to ensure best practice sustainable models of environmental management are instigated as part of The Plan.**

D15 WATER

Water may be a basic necessity of life and the only natural resource for which there is no substitute – but we have no way of increasing our supply without causing problems elsewhere. Desalination is no solution, since it is highly polluting in terms of energy cost, greenhouse gas emissions and waste output. If the government intends pumping desalinated water up over the ranges the cost of such water will be prohibitive. If that is not intended then all this deliberate fast-tracked growth, and the exponential growth which will derive from that, will be an ever increasing burden on the dying River Murray.

Australia has now joined the growing list of countries (USA, China, Mexico, Iran) which are draining their aquifers and rivers faster than they can recharge. Some of the aquifers we are draining have taken thousands of years to fill. One example in South Australia is the Wanbi aquifer which the State Government has only recently given permission for a Virginia based company to extract from for irrigation of proposed new pomegranate orchards.

Our high food producing land, water catchments and rivers must be afforded protection now on the basis of ecosystem services which have been taken for granted by previous generations. Failure to do this will consign future generations to third world living conditions beyond our imagination.

Mount Barker is situated in the Barker-Bremer Catchment, a water system vital for the well being of drier and less productive areas to the east, draining all the way to Lake Alexandrina which is in a parlous state. Surely it is not only unsustainable, but morally unacceptable to further pollute this extremely important catchment.

Mount Barker and its surrounds are located on fractured rock aquifers, which means that water travels underground over a large area and is at greater risk of pollution from mineral leaching or polluted storm water run-off. The area also has underlying geological associations with Nairne, Kanmantoo and Brukunga pyrites which forms highly toxic substances when exposed to air and in the mining process. Due to the underlying fractured rock the District cannot store water in our aquifers and the large distance the water travels and interconnects underground is not known. The water in our aquifers must not be placed at even further risk and placing another STEDS stream adjacent the Mount Barker Creek, our only water course, is potent with environmental risk.

How much will water cost and will this depend on how far from the source? These are very important questions which have not been addressed clearly in The Plan. The Government's desalination plant will alleviate water shortages for the city and suburbs but we do not envisage that it will be pumped up to the Hills. Thus the reliance on the River Murray is retained, to the detriment of the Murray and the community.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minister:

- 1. Considers carefully the water issues prevalent in our communities, both now and in the future.**

D8 HEALTH AND WELLBEING and D13 OPEN SPACE, SPORT AND RECREATION

Good quality development and planning principles that encourage exercise and social interaction along with a high standard of health care and community services work together to improve the overall health and standing of people living in the Mount Barker district. These benefits can only come to fruition if issues mentioned in this submission are taken seriously by the State Government as part of its consultation with The Plan.

Generally the Mount Barker region has not had the same level of services as parts of metropolitan Adelaide, despite the fact towns such as Mount Barker, Nairne and Littlehampton being closer to the Adelaide CBD than many outer Adelaide suburbs. Over the past 10-20 years the residential population for the Mount Barker area has dramatically increased, having some of the highest population increases in the State. One area needing vast improvement is in the field of health and community services.

Having people thrown together at a high rate can have major impacts on the general community – much of it negative. Dramatic population increases and rapid expansion can take away the ability of people and communities to connect – a 12-year cycle is needed for people to personally discover others and evolve. Towns such as Mount Barker, Nairne and Littlehampton have coped poorly with a dramatic rise in population. Housing standards have been deplorable, with homes so close to each other in new housing areas – something seen as unsustainable in current planning documentation.

Currently there is limited open space available for future generations. More than the 12.5% open space requirement should be provided with all new housing and residential development. Good quality open space (e.g. ovals, parks) is desperately needed with existing open space retained. This is to encourage exercise, quality of life, improvement of mental health and reduction in crime rates. Areas are also needed for people to exercise their pets as well as themselves. Obesity is a serious issue in Australia and this region is not immune from the significant health issues related to over indulgence in fatty foods and underexercising.

Questions have been raised if medical services will be able to cope with a dramatic increase in population for the Mount Barker area as currently many services are at stretching point. All services provided at the Mt Barker Hospital for example need more financial assistance to properly service the community.

Critical areas needing more support are the obstetrics service and the provision of after hours doctor services. Respite care to assist elderly and disabled people must be improved and there needs to be a better focus crisis care for people in need or for those affected by domestic violence. Local mental health services must also be given closer attention by government. There are no domestic violence services, aged care and community services are severely limited due to a lack of adequate funding and resources. This cycle cannot continue and these issues are not addressed in The Plan.

Educationally, tertiary education must be improved in Mount Barker – such as the provision of tertiary agricultural studies and having some level of University campus in Mount Barker similar to that at Mount Gambier or Waikerie. Furthermore any local schools that are a state

government responsibility should be given a high priority as many parents are sending their children to schools in other areas. With education we have an opportunity to create a wide range of skilled and creative people who can benefit South Australia.

Our youth are our future and plans to help, assist and retain young people in our area are vital! Improving the community we live in through better parks, schools, social activity, music and arts, festivals and events as well as government services will help young people into adult life, have them perform better at school and/or work and at the same time boost the local economy through people working more efficiently and personally feeling better about themselves.

It is hoped the state Government will look 'outside the square' when it comes to healthcare - good planning, open space, recreational facilities as well as having good quality health and education services. It is hoped the State Government will take the provision of planning, health and community services a lot more seriously than has occurred in more recent years with Mount Barker and nearby townships - regardless of the population in the Mount Barker District.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minister:

- 1. Considers health, social, sport and recreational issues when developing the final version of this Plan.**

CONCLUSION

The proposals in The Plan are NOT the Greater Adelaide region that we want; nor is it the Mt Barker region that we want.

This planning process could have been an opportunity to develop cluster and medium density housing, saving our valuable agricultural lands, supporting appropriate and adequate infrastructure and transport requirements and all based on best practice throughout the world.

Instead it is a mixture of inconsistent, housing centric, developer driven plans with little thought or consideration of local communities. It is a flawed, irresponsible, unprofessional document.

The government appears to be closing its doors on vital options South Australia needs to ensure our future resilience in the face of unmitigated climate change, increasing water shortages and growing scarcity of food, water and natural resources.

We believe the statistical evidence in the background documents is flawed and requires considerable review.

We believe the minimal time allowed to consider such massive changes in our communities, our lives and our children's lives is irresponsible Government.

We feel very strongly that the Government needs to stop being overinfluenced by developers and asks the people what they want - truly ask the people, not just token gestures of consultation.

We support fully the stance taken by our District Council of Mt Barker in their response to The Plan. Together, with other concerned community groups and residents, we are all united against the Government on these issues.

Minister Holloway, throw out the hollow motherhood statements and develop a regional plan that is exciting, welcomed by the community and innovative for all, not just a greedy few.

Please work with our local Council and their communities to develop initiatives that are innovative, invigorating and exciting. Develop ideas that will sustain not only the current, but also the future generations. Let us leave behind a positive legacy - **One that we can be proud of and one that WE ALL WANT!**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this response.

Members of the Mt Barker and District Residents' Association Inc.

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