

Battle to save Hills

A GROUP formed to protect the the Darling Ranges from rampant development hopes to have a preservation Bill before parliament ahead of the next state election.

Save Perth Hills Incorporated is drafting a Bill to protect the Hills from "inappropriate" development.

Chairman Mike Davies said the Bill would be based on the Swan Valley Planning Act 1995.

"It covers areas from Chittering to Serpentine and would mean any major planning decision would need to be approved by a large planning committee," he said.

Mr Davies said the committee would be made up of planning ministry, environmental, business and community representatives.

"If we've got a large group of people in a committee looking at a planning decision, it becomes a harder system to corrupt," he said.

He said the Adelaide Hills, in South Australia, had legal protection, as did the Swan Valley.

"It took the Swan Valley a long time to get it and the Adelaide Hills had its first form of legal protection in 1965, and it is still being modified," he said.

"It does take time, but our goal is that this will be coming before parliament before the next state election."

The group has started a Save Perth Hills preservation campaign that includes car stickers.

"There is such a shortage of land in Perth and land in the Hills is extremely cheap," he said.

"You can buy 100 acres (about 40.5ha) of rural land for \$1 million.

"Developers are buying up big-time and why wouldn't you, if you can get those 100 acres rezoned to urban and then divide the land into 300sq m blocks.

"Think about what that 100 acres would be worth — a lot more than \$1 million.

"There is potentially a huge bonanza for developers in the Hills."

Mr Davies said if urbanisation of the Hills occurred, Perth wouldn't have anywhere that was different from suburbia.

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