

Alannah MacTiernan MLA
Minister for Planning and Infrastructure
13th Floor, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street, West Perth WA 6005
Ph: (08) 9213 6400
Fax: (08) 9213 6401
Email: amactier@mp.wa.gov.au

CC: Ms Jaye Amber Radisich MLA
Electorate Office:
Postal: PO Box 1814, Midland WA 6936
Ph: 9250 2441
Fax: 9250 2337
Email: swanhills@mp.wa.gov.au

Sunday, 30 July 2006

Re: Protection of Perth Hills environment

Dear Ms MacTiernan,

I would like to put forward two serious concerns that I have about the current and future state of the Perth Hills region. No doubt you are already aware of these issues. However, I'd like to express these issues from my perspective as a resident of the hills and as an Australian citizen.

Firstly, I am concerned about the proposed increase in high-density housing in the Perth Hills.

Secondly, I am concerned about the manner in which concerns expressed by a large number of hills residents was discounted at a recent Mundaring Council Meeting on Tuesday 11 July.

Concern 1: Proposed increase in high-density housing in the Perth Hills region

As a resident of Perth and as a person who is concerned about the future of Perth as a whole (not just the hills of Perth), I am very worried about the consequences of the proposed increase in high-density housing developments in the Perth Hills region, especially the developments proposed for the new Parkerville and Stoneville town sites. As a member of the Stoneville Progress Association, I have noted that many other Perth residents are also concerned about the manner in which high-density developments are being planned in conjunction with the Mundaring Council. Much of this development appears to be ignoring the grave concerns held by residents in the area. These concerns include some of the following:

- The small block sizes (some as small as 180 sqm, the bulk of them are less than 1000 sqm) in the new developments are not environmentally sound.
- The lack of services in the area to support the populations of these new developments. The Hills area is already short of services such as local doctors, general health services, primary and high schools, retail, tradespeople, etc.
- The lack of consultation with the local community by the Mundaring Council regarding these developments.
- Serious lack of sewerage and/or water treatment plants to deal with the new populations of these new developments.
- Lack of roads to support these new populations.
- Distance of these proposed new housing developments from major centres and public transport links.

Additionally, I am very concerned that the main issues related to the proposed increase in high-density housing in the Perth Hills are often misinterpreted as those of hills residents only, sometimes incorrectly labelled as "NIMBism" (not-in-my-backyard-ism). However, thinking on a broader scale, the hills surrounding Perth are vital to the environmental health of greater Perth. Some have described the Perth hills as the lungs and kidneys of Perth. As well as forming the

natural environment that surrounds the city, the Perth hills also function as a major water catchment area and as a major provider of habitat to endangered species. For this reason, I think the proposed high-density developments in the Perth hills region are a wider concern – they are not just a concern for local hills residents. Just as if unwieldy new housing or commercial developments were being considered on Rottnest, the people of Perth would also be justly concerned. The unwieldy process of development in the hills region is also a concern for all of the people of Perth. Similar concerns are concurrently being expressed by groups in other areas such as Araluen, Kalamunda, the Swan Valley and in other states.

Concern 2: Mundaring Council Meeting procedures on Tuesday 11 July

As a resident and ratepayer of the Mundaring Shire, I am concerned that democratic processes are not being followed during Mundaring Council Meetings. At least 100 to 120 concerned hills residents, as reported in *The Echo* and *The Hills Gazette*, attended a recent Mundaring Council Meeting on Tuesday 11 July 2006 to express their concern about the future of the Perth hills environment. As far as I am aware, this is one of the highest numbers of residents that have attended such a meeting to express concern about one particular issue. As a member of the Stoneville Progress Association, I also attended the meeting to show support for the motions put forward by the Stoneville Progress Association. These motions were written by the group to communicate our concerns to you about the manner in which housing developments are being conducted in the hills and our concern about the future of the Perth hills in general. Although we did *not* ask the councillors of the Mundaring Council to agree with our motions, we requested that the Mundaring Councillors pass these concerns onto you. The councillors voted 7-3 against our request. As a group and as a concerned resident in the Mundaring Shire, I was quite dismayed at the Council's refusal to do this based on their pronouncement of a low level of community concern (please see page 3 of this letter for evidence that this concern is a concern of many members of the community). The Chairman of the Stoneville Progress Association, Mike Davies, likened this refusal to a postperson refusing to send a letter because he or she didn't agree with the contents of the letter.

Resolution

As a member of the Stoneville Progress Association and as a concerned hills resident, I would endorse a move to legally protect the hills environment for the reasons stated above, as has happened in the Swan Valley, the Adelaide Hills, the Dandenongs and other natural environments. I believe this would represent a visionary manner in which to protect the fragile natural environment that forms part of the Perth's protective fringe. Such a move would be beneficial for the residents and visitors to Perth in the short and the long term. Rather than being perceived as a concern that is held only by hills residents, I propose that the protection and future of the Perth hills are concerns of all Western Australians.

Thank you for reading this letter. As you can see, it reveals some of the issues that the hills residents and other residents of Western Australia are concerned about.

Regards,

Maria Northcote
2740 Brooking Rd
Parkerville WA 6081
Ph. (08) 9295 4110 (H), (08) 6304 5957 (W), 0410 30 6400 (Mob.)
Email: m.northcote@ecu.edu.au

Evidence that the issues associated with the legal protection for the Hills and the two proposed townsites in Stoneville and Parkerville are of a high concern to many members of the community:

- About 120 people filled the Council Chamber last week (Tuesday 11 July 2006), and dozens more could not get into the Council meeting due to a lack of seats, to express their concern, as reported in *The Hills Gazette*.
- Nobody except for some of the councillors spoke in support of development at Parkerville and Stoneville. Apart from the seven councillors who did not support the motions put forward by the Stoneville Progress Association, all others who attended the meeting were not in support of the new developments.
- 17 businesses from Gidgegannup to Kalamunda sell car stickers created by the Stoneville Progress Association which calls for no high-density housing in the Perth hills. The Stoneville Progress Association is currently selling their third batch of a thousand stickers. This shows that the concern is widespread. These stickers are sold for \$2 each, not given away.
- Planning decisions were made during the Mundaring Council meeting on 11 July regarding sheds where just a few neighbours' views influenced the outcome. However, the concern of all those 120 people present was disregarded as insignificant when the final item regarding the Stoneville Progress Association's members was put forward.
- The Parkerville developers have requested a meeting with the Stoneville Progress Association to discuss our concerns. They realise there is strong feeling in the community. However, the Mundaring Council refuse to realise this.
- Local and national newspapers (both online and printed versions) have published articles about the community's concern since October 2002. One of the most recent articles published in the *Sunday Times* (see www.news.com.au/perthnow/story/0,21498,19653187-2761,00.html) drew 25 responses from people in Perth and other parts of Australia. Of these 25 responses, only one of them suggested support for the high-density housing development proposed in the hills. Responses on this scale are surely an indication of widespread community concern. The author of the article noted that this was the highest number of comments she could remember.
- The Stoneville Progress Association's website (www.saveperthhills.org) has a thriving online discussion forum in action in which concerns about the Perth hills are discussed on a regular basis. This site also provides ongoing information about the group's activities. During the month of July (19 days so far) this site has recorded a total of 578 visits, 366 of which are unique visitors, with each visitor viewing on average 12.75 pages during their visit to the website. During this year, the site has recorded over 2000 visits and this trend is increasing. This track record of the quantity and quality of the participation on this website indicates the depth of concern held by these community members. Although most of the visitors are coming from Australia, visitors to the website also originate from Europe, Asia and the United States.

With this evidence before us, the concern about the future of the Perth hills environment could not be considered "low" in either quantitative or qualitative terms.