

Dear Ms. D'Ambrosio.

My name is Bronwyn and I live in Don Valley with my partner Chris and our four children. I am writing to you regarding the Haining Farm redevelopment.

I attended the concept meeting late last year. It wasn't exactly well advertised and I only found out about it by accident. I think a lot of residents didn't even know it was on.

It was clear from the meeting that the Don Valley community have a great attachment to Haining Farm and there was plenty of excitement about all the possibilities for its future.

What was also very clear at the concept meeting was a push to have all or most of the land for conservation and I was told a number of times "we have funding already to have it planted out".

As Black Saturday survivors who lost our home in Flowerdale we take "experts" opinions on bushfire risk with some scepticism.

But if we are going to talk of bushfire risk and pet bushfire experts perhaps the opinions of the CFA or consultants who are not being paid by the proponents of Concept 3 could be sought.

James O'Brien, chief geospatial scientist with Risk Frontiers,
"If you are close to the bushland, the risk increases,"

The chances of the loss of a house located within 50 metres of a major blaze is around 60 per cent, while the maximum distance homes are destroyed is less than 700 metres,

I am not against some replanting at Haining Farm however I am terrified at it being planted out with high fuel Eucalyptus trees. This is no doubt a huge fire risk. There has been no consideration given to planting low fuel trees like broad leaf European trees in some of the plantings.

My daughters Indigo 9 and Persia 7 both came to their own conclusion - "Mum, if they plant all the gum trees there will be no community"

I am not sure whether you have been to Don Valley but there are homes just across the road from Haining Farm (less than 50 metres) and behind them are a network of streets, the primary school and lots of houses. These houses are to the North East of Haining Farm which means a fire being blown by a South Westerly wind (the most dangerous of fire conditions) will come out of Haining Farm straight into those houses.

House fires burn much hotter than bushfires and once a bushfire gets in amongst the houses it's like a chain reaction as it spreads from house to house. In Flowerdale, there was a small subdivision called Creekside with 47 houses. Only 3 survived Black Saturday. The closest bush was 80 - 100 metres away.

One of the recommendations of the Black Saturday Royal Commission was the protection of "townships" via the planting of buffer zones of less fire prone vegetation. This sensible advice seems to have been lost in the scramble for habitat.

Haining Farm was "gifted" to the people of Victoria as a Working Teaching Farm.

I don't see how this can be torn up by a total vote of 2354 (for and against).

That isn't broader community support and let's not talk about all the emails to friends and employees of Zoo's Victoria urging them to vote for Concept 3.

The adoption of Concept 2 would be an incredible opportunity for the area. We could open it up to the locals and the broader community with upgrading to include a "Don Valley Dairy" selling value added products like cheeses, local produce and locally made items.

Upgrading walking tracks, toilet blocks maybe even adding a playground.

On weekends the Yarra Valley is busy with tourists. We have abundant locally grown produce, wines and places to see. A place like Haining Farm, or what Haining Farm could be, would be a wonderful addition for all to enjoy .

The animals and the birds don't really care if trees are native or introduced. They will use them for nesting and shelter and some species as a food source.

Parks Victoria is at present cutting down and burning the old Cypress trees at Haining farm. These trees will be replaced with seedling Eucalypts. So we are removing big old trees that provide shelter/habitat, even if dying or dead, and replacing them with seedlings that provide no shelter. Am I missing something here?

Will the possums and honeyeaters be forced to become ground dwellers?

Conservation for my family starts where we live. Our children are so proud that we live in the "wildwood" surrounded by native wildlife.

Unfortunately, in the upper reaches of Don Valley, we are being impacted by foxes and ever increasing numbers of Sambar deer.

They are having a devastating effect on the natural ecosystem and the wildlife it supports but Greening Aus, Zoos Victoria et al are not interested.

My family is part of the Don Valley Community. Our vote comes from the heart and is not in response to "Rent a crowd" emails sent out by Zoos Vic/Greening Aus.

Haining Farm is such an important piece of the Don Valley landscape. We all love the cows that line up for milking at 4.30 pm and, as a family, we love picking the wild apples and plums that grow along the fence line and making jam with them.

It makes no sense at all to put the community at risk when there is a sensible compromise on the table.

I feel anxious and actually quite angry that our community wasn't listened to whereas a non-representative campaign run by Greening Aus and Zoo's Vic etc was allowed to swamp the desires of the local community through their spending power.

I invite you to visit Don Valley and try to imagine all of the beautiful lush pasture turned into bush and ask yourself "would I feel safe living across the road from that during a hot summer?"

As a community I am sure you would be warmly welcomed if you have the time to stop by ...
I may even have a spare jar of our Don Valley Wild Apple and mixed berry jam for you.

Please, there is still time to reconsider.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Regards

Bronwyn, Chris, Indigo, Persia, Daisy and Poppy

PS - Attached are 2 drawings from our daughters Indigo and Persia - Who wanted their say as well.

Our other (twin) daughters Daisy and Poppy are too young to send you a drawing however I am sure they will miss the **MOO MOOS**.