

Yarra River Protection Program Manager
Planning Policy Implementation
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From Drs Ruth and Ian Gawler
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Gladysdale 3797

We live on a lifestyle property adjacent to the Little Yarra River and are deeply concerned by the changes proposed for the Crown Land along the River frontage, and very unhappy with the process that has been conducted so far in regard to these proposed changes. Our concerns are

1. Misleading title

Labelling these proposed changes during the early consultation process as the "Yellingbo Conservation Area" was seriously misleading. All local residents are aware that Yellingbo is where the endangered Helmeted Honey Eater lives and that major conservation efforts are being made to protect its habitat. No local would imagine that the Yellingbo area includes vast tracts of the Upper Yarra. Living in Gladysdale, there is no thought that anything impacting on Yellingbo would include us.

It feels as if this name was chosen to mislead.

2. Lack of consultation

We remember reading something in the local paper re the Yellingbo Conservation Area and thinking it good something more was being done for the Helmeted Honey Eater. We did not read it thoroughly as there was no suggestion the changes being proposed would impact on us directly – it was Yellingbo after all, not Gladysdale, not the Upper Yarra.

Apparently we were meant to have been sent some written advise of the proposals along with an invitation to respond. We can be sure, that along with many others who were also entitled to be informed, we did not receive any such advice.

Therefore we feel as if we have been denied consultation on this matter and are astounded legislation that does affect us greatly could have been enacted without a reasonable and fair consultation process.

3. Weed control

If the changes go ahead, there is strong evidence weeds will become rampant. As a River frontage owner, I know what a constant and large job it is for us to maintain weed control. Like our fellow residents, we have no confidence in some Government agency being able to do this, especially if there is a concerted re-vegetation program implemented.

4. Fire Risk

While re-vegetation will not pose a big additional fire risk in our specific location – it is already high - I know this issue is of deep concern to many residents and to the CFA.

How this risk may be managed is not at all clear, and the potential for serious fire problems is very real.

5. Change in amenity

We purchased the land we live on, and paid a premium for it, specifically for the amenity of the river. We enjoy an extraordinarily beautiful landscape and the proposed changes would impact on this drastically. As a result, we believe the value of our property would be significantly diminished.

6. Change in use

We appreciate that the river frontage is crown land and that we have enjoyed its use based upon a lease arrangement. However, to my knowledge, these leases have been in place for many decades and there has never been a suggestion that they would be altered in such a dramatic way as is now proposed.

These changes will significantly reduce the arable land available to affected landholders. In our case, it could reduce the potential grazing area by 10 – 20 % - a highly significant amount.

Again, this is a change that we believe will directly diminish the value of our property.

7. The question of compensation

Given the way these proposed changes are likely to reduce property values, and given they come without fair warning to purchasers of the land, we believe due compensation will be a reasonable expectation.

8. High level of community opposition

All involved in these proposed changes need to be aware of the high level of community outrage created by this proposition. The strong level of opposition that follows is based both on the impacts of the changes and the process that has been conducted so far.

Drs Ruth and Ian Gawler
5 August 2016