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Member for Mornington

Implementing the new Vegetation Clearance Rules Legislative Assembly 15th October 2009

Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — Over one month ago the government announced interim measures for bushfire protection for all except 21 municipalities across the state. While many councils have expressed their concern at losing the total control of the process, they have nevertheless taken the changes in their stride.

The Mornington Peninsula council has traditionally taken a tough line on vegetation clearance, and it has been the subject of many complaints to my office.

Despite reservations, the council has embraced the changes and given appropriate publicity to the new arrangements. In doing so it has recognised that homeowners will almost always be responsible in the way they prepare for the fire season. I congratulate the council for its pragmatic approach.

Unfortunately the City of Frankston has decided that the changes do not apply to it. Instead of supporting its community, the council has threatened to prosecute it, falsely claiming that trees over a certain size cannot be removed.

The council's stance is causing considerable confusion, and more importantly, delay in preparation for the fire season. I urge the ministers for local government and planning to make sure that all residents of Frankston understand the real rules, rather than the misinformation being peddled by the council.