



MEDIA RELEASE

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MADDEN ABANDONS WOODLANDS PROTECTION MEASURES

Planning Minister Justin Madden secretly scuttled plans to protect the Mount Eliza Woodlands in late October yet the disgraceful decision was only revealed in a special Government Gazette published on Tuesday (8 December).

Amendment C87 had lain ignored on the Minister's desk for over two years before his clandestine decision to reject controls strongly supported by local residents and the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

The move means the long battle to protect the sensitive slopes of Mount Eliza from over-development has been lost. A flurry of applications for subdivision into smaller blocks is now likely.

The 'State Planning Policy Framework', contained in every planning scheme, identifies the need to encourage higher density populations close to activity centres and easily accessible by public transport. The Framework also recognises the Mornington Peninsula as an environmentally sensitive area requiring protection from development which would diminish environmental and conservation values.

The Minister's decision is not only totally inconsistent with these two stated government objectives, but it also recklessly encourages a much greater intensity of development in an area of high bushfire risk.

The Woodlands is a considerable distance from Mount Eliza village, much too far to walk with the shopping, and is not served at all by public transport. It is an area characterised by steep slopes, deep gullies creeks, and is highly susceptible to land degradation and erosion.

Rejection of the amendment will lead to many more houses being built remote from services, requiring many more car trips, burning a lot more fuel, and creating extra traffic congestion in Mount Eliza Village.

The construction of homes on new smaller blocks will require the clearance of many trees, with more threatened by resident's need to take action to protect their properties from fire. The local fauna and flora are already struggling with the drought and there is now a real risk that both will be fatally compromised.

The Minister's decision is both contrary to good planning and contemptuous of local opinion. It exposes once and for the hollow nature of the Government's promises to protect the Mornington Peninsula.