



## **DAVID MORRIS MP**

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### **Labor's New Growth Boundary is Not The Answer**

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**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) — I rise to speak briefly on this motion. The member for Box Hill has put very clearly that this is an all-or-nothing motion — we either accept it or reject it, but we cannot amend it. He also talked about clause 12, but that is a discussion for another day. Unfortunately the advice that we cannot amend this motion is entirely accurate, and it is a completely unfortunate outcome which has been arrived at because of the actions of the government and its failure to negotiate on this issue. It has come about because of the government's decision to play short-term politics with an issue that will have an effect on Victoria for years to come.

In making that short-term decision to play green-wedge politics the government has made it impossible to achieve a shared vision. This issue has been running for a long time. When the Minister for Housing moved the motion before lunch today he referred to 'extraordinary consultation — I think those were the words he used — and we certainly have had extraordinary consultation.

We have had the sort of consultation we have seen in other places and we have come to expect for planning matters: an outcome has been determined and the consultation occurs in order to provide justification for the final decision. There is lots of listening; there is no change. It is not genuine consultation; it is simply going through the process, so we are stuck with what is there.

The government has refused to negotiate and refused to consider alternate arrangements such as whether the boundary is in the right place, which means that projects such as the Bunyip food bowl are compromised. This project has the support of seven councils in the south-east and the support of Melbourne Water, South East Water, Southern Rural Water, but its successful completion requires the protection of the rich agricultural land in the lower Bunyip basin. If you link that rich agricultural land with class A recycled water from the eastern treatment plant, then you have an excellent opportunity to increase food production in the south-east.

As I said, it is widely supported. I know a number of government members, particularly the members in the other place, are well acquainted with the

proposal, yet the government has refused to consider burying this scheme to allow that project to proceed.

The expansion in the south-east of the Casey urban area is strongly opposed by the City of Casey, but that is not because it is opposed to growth. It has an excellent record in handling, facilitating and managing growth; it is very good at it. In this case the City of Casey did not support an extension of the urban growth boundary because, as it has made very, very clear, the infrastructure is simply not there and is unlikely to be there for a very long time. Infrastructure in that area is unplanned and unbudgeted, and will once again lag way behind the release of the land.

The government has taken steps to protect grasslands in the west of the metropolitan area, and those are certainly steps I welcome, but I put it to the house that this is a complete and utter policy failure, where we lose prime agricultural land very close to the metropolitan area. In the words of the old real estate people, they are not making it any more. In times of climate change we are going to have less and less prime agricultural land. This is good land close to a reliable long-term water source, and because of this government's policy we are going to lose it.

The government has devised this process. It is the government's legislation that forces the matter to be dealt with in this way. It has refused to deal with the matter objectively. It has refused to deal with the matter in a genuinely consultative way. The government is effectively treating the Victorian people with utter contempt. It is effectively holding a gun to the collective heads of all Victorians.

The choice is to either accept this bad option or run the very real risk of causing chaos in the Victorian economy by freezing the urban growth boundary completely. That is the choice that the government has forced, and unfortunately that is the choice that we have to make. There are very many reasons why this is a bad bargain, but it is the best bargain that could be achieved. Unfortunately the Labor Party has decided that it is prepared to play Russian roulette with the state, and that is not a situation that we can support.