

COMMUNITY COMMENT

Port Bouvard in the Hills feared

THE recent announcement that the Port Bouvard Group has acquired 483 hectares of Gidgegannup to develop "the first master-planned townsite of this size in the Hills" housing 12,000 people should strike fear into the hearts of Perth residents.

If this proposal is allowed to go ahead, it will set a precedent that will mean 300sqm blocks become the new benchmark.

The Save Perth Hills group started a campaign more than two years ago to inform Hills residents that suburbanisation was on the way.

We were told by many that this would never happen and we were "simply misinformed scaremongers".

There is now great concern that Port Bouvard is about to make those predictions a reality.

The development industry ran out of large tracts of land for subdivision close to Perth some time ago. They have since realised that rural land in the Hills is very cheap.

All that is required to justify rezoning of this land from rural to urban is a supposed community benefit.

So, a very small number of retirement units in the middle of nowhere and a few small shops are used to justify increasing the Hills population by many thousands.

This creates a retirement accommodation problem that is waiting to happen.

Furthermore, climate change and oil pricing make

this kind of sprawling suburbanisation totally inappropriate.

There is an industry campaign now to convince us that by extending Perth's urban sprawl even further this will improve housing affordability.

Does this mean that Port Bouvard will be selling blocks in Gidgegannup substantially below present market values?

Developers have themselves inflated land prices by holding on to blocks as they watched prices rise.

Legislation should be introduced to ensure that this kind of manipulation could not happen once developments are approved.

The Hills are desperately short of doctors, who prefer to work closer to the city.

Similarly, the necessary infrastructure to support such development, such as roads, power and internet services, are not present.

These and other essential services and infrastructure can take years to arrive - Ellenbrook, with its huge population, has only just acquired a police station - 14 years after development began.

The Save Perth Hills group and other parties are drafting a Bill to protect the Perth Hills region from inappropriate development, logging and mining and to ensure its future as an essential water catchment and buffer zone for the coastal plain.

I urge anyone who has concerns for the future of the Hills to write to the Premier and the Planning Minister, register those concerns and support

the Perth Hills Protection Bill.

The Hills are part of what makes Perth special and now is the time to act to ensure their integrity for future generations.

*Mike Davies,
chairman,
Save Perth Hills Inc.,
Stoneville.*