

Council pledges talks on Rock

By Matt Crossman

Macedon Ranges council has vowed to consult the community about any plans to maximise revenue to fund the maintenance needs of Hanging Rock Reserve.

As reported by *Star Weekly*, the Heritage Council announced on March 6 that Hanging Rock Reserve was of cultural significance and warranted inclusion on the heritage register.

But it ruled that the eastern paddock, where a series of concerts have been held, should not be included.

As a result of the decision, Macedon Ranges council must seek a permit from Heritage Victoria for any works at the reserve outside of exemptions included in the listing.

The exemptions will allow landscaping, events that won't affect structures and features, and maintenance to roads and buildings.

Mayor Jennifer Anderson said the council was confident it would be able to tend to these needs without having to go back to Heritage Victoria for approval of every project.

But she said securing ongoing funding for Hanging Rock remained a challenge.

She said that while the Rock earned its keep, infrastructure around the reserve such as tables, toilets and other buildings needed improvement.

"A lot of that infrastructure is getting very old," Cr Anderson said.

"Pests and weed control are also a huge ongoing cost."

In May last year, the council abandoned

plans to seek investment at Hanging Rock after the previous state government announced a \$1 million maintenance fund, provided over four years.

Cr Anderson stressed there were no existing plans for development.

"But if anything was to be put on the table, there would be very early community input," she said.

Hanging Rock Action Group spokesman Hilary Roberts said residents had long called for greater consultation.

“ We have absolutely no faith in council ”

- Hilary Roberts

He said repeated requests for a local Landcare representative to be appointed to the Rock's advisory committee had been denied.

Mr Roberts said the funding agreement with the state government stated that the council must do something to protect the eastern paddock from inappropriate development.

"We're confident we will get action at the state level," he said. "We have absolutely no faith in council."

The council is working on an environmental management plan to guide environmental and conservation works at the reserve and eastern paddock.

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