



#6 Error - That the Hanging Rock development proposal responds to the MRSC Natural Environment Strategy

In examining the proposal for development at Hanging Rock it became obvious that a number of facts were incorrectly stated. We have tried to point these out to Council so that decisions can be made on the basis of correct information. Council policy is that if an error occurs in documents produced by Council, that error would be corrected at the earliest opportunity.

Hanging Rock Information Bulletin #3, published 6 November 2013, poses the following Question and Answer in support of the Hanging Rock Development & Investment Plan (HRDIP)

Q: How does this concept respond to the MRSC Natural Environment Strategy ?

A: The Macedon Ranges Natural Environment Strategy (NES) articulates a **sustainable economic development approach** to protection and enhancement of the Shires environmental assets. The NES specifically addresses Hanging Rock and recognizes that the primary management task is to balance biodiversity conservation and tourist visitation. It also references the 1993 management plan and purchase of the adjacent farm land with an aim to 'help reduce the concentration of visitor numbers on the natural areas of the Reserve and thereby help reduce the impact of (sic) the biodiversity of the site.'

Wrong.

The NES advocates very strongly for ecological sustainability. 'A sustainable economic development approach' is not mentioned in this document, nor is 'the notion ...that economic sustainability can drive positive environmental outcomes'.

The summary on pages 4-6 of the NES outlines nine environmental themes.

An "**ecologically** sustainable economy' is articulated in one theme – discussion includes the importance of the quality of the local environment to many small businesses, 'green accreditation' and 'facilitating economic development in the Shire that is consistent with the principles of ecological sustainability'.

The NES specifically discusses Hanging Rock on p126. The need to balance biodiversity conservation and tourist visitation was a key goal in developing the 1993 management plan and it was deemed possible, with the purchase of the East Paddock, by relocating activity away from 'the sensitive areas of the reserve'.

BUT the HRDIP actually increases the footprint of activity in the Crown land (Nature Focused Adventure facility, buggy trails, platforms) and results in the 'loss' of East Paddock land that might have been used for relocation of activities away from the sensitive areas at the base of the Rock.

Regional Development Australia funding has been obtained for a range of works, including:

- Two visitor shelters, with permanent toilets and BBQs in the north-east corner of the east Paddock.

This is the same area subsequently proposed for the conference centre, restaurant and accommodation development!

- A Five Mile Creek habitat area on the Southern side of the land. Creek-side apartments and a day spa are proposed for this area in the HRDIP - **so how can this area be used to relocate existing activities away from the base of the Rock?**

How does giving over such a large area of the East Paddock to private enterprise result in “a more integrated and resilient reserve”??

The HRDIP will NOT result in an environmentally more resilient Reserve. This would be achieved by increasing the area of native vegetation, its complexity and its connections to other substantive remnant vegetation. Development proposed for sensitive areas of vegetation – the remnant Woodlands, the Grasslands, and the riparian zone of Five Mile Creek – will reduce the resilience of these areas. There will also be a loss of opportunities to buffer the existing reserve, revegetation areas and roadside remnant, as well as less area available for passive recreation.

The MRSC Natural Environment Strategy was NOT a reference document for the preparation of the HRDIP.

The aims of the Hanging Rock Action Group have been consistent.

1. Have Council undertake Community Consultation
2. Distil the real issues and facts of the proposed development
3. Raise community awareness of the issues

This misleading error confusing ‘economic development’ with “Ecological sustainability’ has been pointed out to Council but to date no acknowledgement of the error has been made and no correction has been provided to Councillors or the community.

Surely Councillors and the Community are entitled to be told directly that a gross error was present in the **Hanging Rock Information Bulletin #3 published on 6 November, 2013** does not reflect Council Strategy.

Why doesn't Council publish a correction as per their stated policy?

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