



## **The McLaren Vale Character Preservation (McLaren Vale) Act 2012 Review**

Friends of Willunga Basin (FOWB) absolutely supports the McLaren Vale Character Preservation (McLaren Vale) Act 2012.

We welcome the opportunity to provide comment on the questions posed in the discussion paper, as follows.

### **Are the values and character of the area being adequately protected?**

Character is a matter of both how the existing built form and natural environment are already presented and how new development alters this over time.

Given the restrictions on land division now in place, residential development patterns across the McLaren Vale Character Area (MVCA) – i.e. in non-township areas – are largely set. While new development will continue to occur, it will tend to follow the existing pattern and, we suspect, be of limited effect at a landscape scale.

We note the statistics at page 8 of the Discussion Paper and suggest that these may reflect latent development potential already in the system at the time the Act came in to force. If this is so, then the real test will be over the next 5 years.

Non-residential development can be more problematic. Appropriate, well thought out and well presented non-residential development is to be encouraged and will help to underpin the economic future of the region. On the other hand, through inappropriate siting, scale or design, such development can also have significant adverse effects on the appearance and amenity of localized portions of the MVCA and FOWB has certainly seen several examples of this in the last several years. As against the Development Plan, and given that the Act deals with land division and regional character, which are matters operating in different spheres, the Act is an important bulwark against inappropriate development. If anything, the primacy of this requirement needs to be reinforced through the planning system.

In the natural environment, we are greatly encouraged by moves on several fronts (DPTI, Council, NRM, SA Power Networks and the (FOWB sponsored) McLaren Vale Biodiversity Project) to rein in the spread of feral olives. We advocate strongly for continuation of this work, to benefit both the biodiversity and the clean green appearance of the district.

By and large therefore, the values of the MVCA are being protected, but this remains largely a function of the nature of the development applications that lodged over any given period – and monitoring these requires continued vigilance on the part of local community groups like FOWB.

### **Are land division controls adequate to ensure that character is maintained?**

It was always expected that a certain amount of land division would continue after the passing of the Act, often through the reconfiguration of existing titles and the like.

However, wholesale land division outside the town boundaries does not appear to be a significant issue, as per the statistics in the Discussion Paper.

To the extent that it is an issue, it is often through the nature of residential development within the (excluded from the MVCA) townships, where character is often under threat from over-zealous land division activity.

### **Have changes to the Planning Strategy and the Development Plan helped their implementation.**

We have not paid close attention to this matter, but regard such changes as an essential underpinning of the Act when it comes to its on-ground implementation.

### **What are the family, social, environmental and economic impacts of the Act?**

The question could scarcely be broader.

However, FOWB takes the view that the effects can only be positive. Agriculture and tourism will be two of the mainstays of the SA economy for the next generation and beyond. The preservation of an intact and value adding working agricultural landscape of considerable beauty only a short distance from the Adelaide CBD creates an economic asset *par excellence* and makes the MVCA one of the jewels in South Australia's crown.

In the same vein, the Act is also ensuring the future of a vibrant and cohesive community, and securing ongoing opportunity for all of the members of that community to benefit from the MVCA's enhanced economic 'status'.

### **Have there been positive or negative effects on farming?**

There have been no negative effects that FOWB can see.

If the positive effects can be measured by the continuation of existing agricultural patterns and the increasingly buoyant of the grape and wine sector, then they are manifest and available for all to see.

### **Are changes needed in the Act?**

FOWB seeks no change in the Act, although this is not a question that we have considered via a clause by clause review of the legislation.

The present act includes in **section 7 Character values of district** the following:

7 (b) The heritage attributes of the district;

7 (c) The built form of the townships as they relate to the district

If we have one observation, it is that the character of the towns within the MVCA may be under just as great a threat than the MVCA itself. To this extent, some acknowledgement within the planning system of the greater landscape context within which these towns sit, and the desirability that their rural township character be preserved, would seem to be appropriate. This would mean adopting a

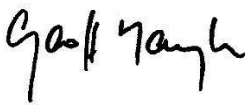
non-urban mind-set to their future planning and development.

## 2 Does the new planning system need to allow for character preservation?

Absolutely it does. FOWB's fear is that the simplification of the development system that will result from introduction of the Planning Code will not leave room for the recognition of regional character. In both the MVCA and the townships that lie within it, the future Planning Code will hopefully support but, at the very least, must not work against character preservation – as will be the case if urban policies bleed over the hill from Seaford.

The area beyond the southern urban boundary must be recognized as being of a different nature and character to the urban portions of Onkaparinga specifically and the Adelaide Metropolitan Area more generally.

Yours sincerely,



Chair Friends of Willunga Basin

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