

Friends of Willunga Basin inc.

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The Editor
Southern Times

The letter from Michael and Julia Drought ("Urban creep is infecting the Vale", Southern Times, January 27th) clearly set out the bewilderment and unhappiness they feel at the imminent arrival of a mini-burb on their doorstep, courtesy of an approach to planning from Government and Council that appears to say one thing while allowing another thing to happen. The Droughts concern about the sudden appearance of this urban-style development well outside the McLaren Vale town boundary is shared by Friends of Willunga Basin; the California Road development runs counter to recent and seemingly unequivocal Government statements about preventing further urban expansion around McLaren Vale. Along with the Droughts, people are attracted to towns in the Willunga Basin because of their rural ambience and relationship to agricultural activity, not for their suburban feel and urban facilities. Planning Minister Paul Holloway and the Member for Mawson, Leon Bignell both claim to recognise this and have offered their assurances that the town boundary will remain in place.

Minister Holloway, for instance, places great store in the 30 Year Plan to protect agriculture in the Basin. In a letter to the Southern Times (26/8/09) he says "The Government's 30-Year Plan has made it clear that the vineyards in the McLaren Vale area are "no-go" zones". Member for Mawson, Leon Bignell, on the other hand has said; "we (the Government) are offering a rock solid guarantee that the town boundarieswill remain in place and agricultural land will be protected" (Southern Times, 19/8/09).

Yet, the California Road development with its "rural living" blocks (is it really possible to engage in rural enterprise on half a hectare?), appears to run counter to their words and has, conceivably, damaged their credibility on this matter. While Friends of Willunga Basin doesn't doubt the good intentions of Minister Holloway, or the Member for Mawson Leon Bignell, preventing urban expansion is ultimately about deeds, not words; the Government must do more to convince the community; it is time for them to get serious about bringing in legislation to protecting agricultural land in the Basin from urban sprawl.

Yours faithfully
Richard Bennett
Chairperson - Friends of Willunga Basin