

Jobs rest on market plan

By Casey Neill

There are 200 jobs resting on the State Planning Minister's decision on a proposed Bangholme produce market.

Richard Wynne will seek the Greater Dandenong community's opinion on the green wedge project through an advisory committee.

Greater Dandenong Council approved the DandyFresh application to develop a Harwood Road site in June last year, and opponents appealed against the decision to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

Mr Wynne announced this month that he'd decided to intervene before it reached VCAT, a move he flagged with the Journal last September.

His spokesman said the review would focus on the proposal's size and scale.

The Greater Dandenong Green Wedge Management Plan caps building heights at 8 metres in green wedge-zoned areas, and site coverage at 20 per cent.

The wholesale produce market would have 10 metre-high buildings and cover about 68 per cent of the site through a 5000 square metre sterilisation facility and 8700 square metre warehouse.

"This proposal deserves a proper examination because our precious green wedges are too important to be put at risk," the spokesman said.

"We've established a considered process, which will help determine whether the project delivers a clear benefit to the community."

A DandyFresh spokeswoman said 200 jobs were on the line and that more than 40 growers in the South-East had expressed in-

terest in the facility.

"Many of the growers and retailers in the region are currently forced to travel to and from Epping, creating congestion on our roads and adding costs to consumers," she said.

"The Minister has decided to send this project to a planning panel, avoiding costly and complex delays at VCAT.

"However, it's also important for him to provide certainty to businesses and consumers in the South-East."

Defenders of the South East Green Wedge secretary Barry Ross said the group was relieved that the minister called-in the application "as we consider it is a large-scale industrial-type development that would make a complete mockery of the whole green wedge concept".

"Green wedges are meant to be about open landscape and rural activities, not large warehouse buildings and the busy truck traffic that this proposal would generate," he said.

"Hopefully the minister's action will send a warning shot across the bows of the land bankers and others who are hoping that this proposal will get the go ahead and provide a precedent for more such development in the green wedges."

Greater Dandenong Councillor Matthew Kirwan opposed the application, along with Cr Maria Sampey, and said the minister's decision vindicated their stand.

He said the development was "a large-scale industrial development suitable for an Industrial Zone not the Green Wedge, completely incompatible with both the nature of the zone itself and our own council's recently developed Green Wedge Management Plan".

BANGHOLME

Minister enters market row

VICTORIAN Planning Minister Richard Wynne will decide whether a council-approved \$15 million fruit and vegetable market will go ahead in Bangholme.

The market would operate from 4am to 4pm five days a week, with up to 400 customers in morning peak periods on a square of Green Wedge land on Harwood Rd.

Under the *Dandenong Green Wedge Management Plan* developments must not include buildings higher

than 8m or have impervious surfaces exceeding 20 per cent. The market proposal includes buildings as high as 10m and a hard surface area of 68 per cent.

"This proposal deserves a proper examination because our precious green wedges are too important to be put at risk," Mr Wynne said.

"We're giving locals a chance to have their say on this proposal.

"We've established a considered process, which will

help determine whether the project delivers a clear benefit to the community."

Dandenong councillor Matthew Kirwan welcomed the minister's decision.

"This vindicates Cr Sampey's and I's stand during the council debate to oppose this development as a large-scale industrial development," he said.

"If this went ahead the interpretation of 'market' and 'rural industry' — both allowed uses in the Green

Wedge Zone — would arguably change from benign farmers' markets and small-scale rural activities to industrial developments."

A DandyFresh spokeswoman said more than 200 jobs would be in jeopardy if the market did not go ahead.

"DandyFresh has expressions of interest from over 40 growers in the south east who recognise that a wholesale facility in the south east is essential to support their businesses and customers."



Cr Matthew Kirwan opposes a market on Green Wedge land.