

MEDIA RELEASE

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PAL INTENT LOST

Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest stated that the review of the Protection of Agricultural Land (PAL) Policy is a much needed process to ensure the original intent of this policy is achieved.

According to Hansard recordings of the debate on September 13th 2000, building on agricultural land should not fetter the productivity of that land. The then Leader for the Government, Hon Michael Aird stated, "If the proposal did not fetter the sustainable continued productivity of prime agricultural land then it would be reasonable to expect that the planning scheme would allow the council to consider the application."

"Unfortunately we are seeing property owners, such as John and Sylvia Smith, having owned their land for many years with a view to building in the future, to enable maximisation not fettering, of the agricultural venture, being denied, with reference to the PAL policy as the reason" Ms Forrest stated.

Mr and Mrs Smith have pursued options for sale of the land to surrounding land owners and to forestry operators, but as almost all their property is classed 4-6 and very steep, it is not attractive to other purchasers. It does provide grazing for a number of beef cattle which Mr and Mrs Smith run.

Hansard 13th September 2000 further has Mr Aird stating "...if a person wants to build a house on class 3 land but it is not all class 3 and 4 or whatever, would this policy prevent them? The answer is no, the policy would not prevent them..."

Mr Aird further stated on September 13th 2000, "I would like to emphasise the Government's commitment to protecting the agricultural land resource in this State and ensuring its continued productive capacity....A house will only be prohibited if it does not align with the objective of the policy to maintain a productive capacity of agricultural land within this State..."

"If land owners such as Mr and Mrs Smith are denied the opportunity to build on their land to further enhance its productivity, they may be forced to let this parcel of land go to weeds and degradation – how is this in the best interests of a policy that aims to 'maintain a productive capacity of agricultural land'?" Ms Forrest questioned.

It should be noted that the purpose of the PAL Policy is 'to foster sustainable agriculture in Tasmania by ensuring the continued productive capacity of the State's agricultural land resource'.

"The need for an overhaul of the application of the intent and purpose of this policy, with clear guidelines from the Government, that reflect the statements made in 2000 is clear" Ms Forrest stated.

"Blame shifting from Government to local councils, RMPAT and the RPDC needs to stop and the clearly stated intent of this policy as debated in 2000 be adhered to" Ms Forrest said.

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For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.

John and Sylvia Smith of Flowerdale have had their dwelling on class 3 agricultural land rejected by the RMPAT citing non-compliance with the PAL policy. John and Sylvia are willing to speak with the media and can be contacted on (03) 64422521.