

Sanctuary Views Estate, Lara Caddys Road Amendment C73

EXPERT EVIDENCE TO PLANNING PANEL

No threat to Serendip Sanctuary, says leading botanist

One of Victoria's most respected botanists has given a green light to Lara's proposed new housing estate opposite Serendip Sanctuary.

Geoff Carr, BSc, is a member of the Environmental Institute of Australia, an Honorary Research Associate at the National Herbarium of Victoria, and a member or board member of 11 other professional associations.

Mr Carr conducted a comprehensive study of the land proposed for residential development – bounded by Caddys Road, Flinders Avenue and Windermere Road, Lara - and gave expert evidence to the Independent Planning Panel.

He concluded that residential development in that area poses no threat to Serendip Sanctuary or its wildlife.

Mr Carr's evidence to the panel was not challenged by any objector, and it was accepted by the panel members.

His evidence was consistent with the findings of earlier reports by other experts.

The following excerpts provide a summary of his views:

- "Given that all the captive breeding facilities are located at some distance from Windermere Road and that ambient disturbance conditions now include 1000+ vehicle movements per day along Windermere Road, and that it is a VicRoads truck bypass route for Lara, it is difficult to see how Serendip could be significantly impacted."
- "Grey Kangaroos feed on the subject land and are sometimes killed on Windermere Road by vehicles. That the subject land attracts kangaroos is not in question, but from an animal welfare viewpoint and human safety viewpoint roadkills are unacceptable. People as well as more kangaroos are jeopardised by the grazing of kangaroos on the subject land."

- "There is fairly low potential to disturb fauna in Serendip by lights and noise from the proposed residential area, however we note that ambient conditions regarding these disturbance factors currently prevail. We believe that disturbance from light can be managed by directing street lights away from Serendip, and screening light and noise by the proposed 50 metre wide buffer of vegetation along the south side of Windermere Road."
- "Whether or not cats or dogs are permitted in the proposed residential development is unlikely to be an issue for management of Serendip's fauna. All captive management programs, as a basic principle, rely on predator-proof fencing to protect the fauna; Parks Victoria maintains a feral animal control program at Serendip outside enclosures."
- "I have no concerns regarding the integrity of the Ramsar wetlands or the wetlands of Serendip Creek and Hovells Creek..."
- "Small numbers of Cape Barren Geese graze vegetation and roost within the subject land, while the Ibis species feed on insects and roost in trees elsewhere. The subject land constitutes a miniscule (though unquantified) proportion of available habitat regionally. The use of habitat on the subject land is also intermittent and opportunistic. For example, there would have been a period of 5-6 months in 2009 when none of the species would have been able to utilise the land because it carried a barley crop. The subject land cannot be regarded as critical habitat and its loss to these species because of development is not regarded as a significant impact."
- "The land supports no native vegetation as defined under *Victoria's Native Vegetation Framework*. A total of 29 indigenous plant species was recorded, but these have very low cover. The entire area was cropped (barley) in 2009-10 and this land use, and its history of stock grazing, has essentially destroyed the indigenous vegetation."
- "Many objectors expressed concern that the proposed residential development would adversely impact on Serendip Sanctuary and its operation. However, no objector mentioned how the sanctuary would be negatively impacted or presented evidence to support claims of its values or functions being compromised."