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KALAMUNDA NEWS

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Planning Minister John Day has knocked back a proposal to re-zone lot 500 Gavour Rd from special rural to special use (residential aged care).

SARAH BROOKES

A PROPOSAL to amend the local planning scheme to pave the way for the establishment of a residential aged care facility in Wattle Grove has been rejected by WA Planning Minister John Day.

Mr Day said while he supported the desire of the shire, and many in the local community, for more residential aged care facilities to be

developed in the area, the Western Australian Planning Commission believed it was inconsistent with the rural character of the area.

He said the proposed development also lacked necessary urban services and utilities such as reticulated sewerage.

"Although the inability of the site to be connected to the reticulated sewerage system is a major factor, it was not

the only issue considered," he said.

"Consideration was also given to the strategic planning that is still required to be undertaken for the locality."

Mr Day said there has been no adequate demonstration that the area can be urbanised in the short or medium term, or that it could meet various state planning policy requirements for the appropriate siting for aged care facilities.

"All issues considered the only proper decision is to not approve the amendment," he said.

"To do otherwise would be to continue a false expectation regarding the community's desire for additional residential aged care facilities on this site."

Shire of Kalamunda president Donald McKechnie said he was disappointed by the decision.

"But I understand John Day's reasoning behind what was a very difficult decision," he said. Mr McKechnie said the decision would

be unpopular in some sectors of the community.

"This issue has been bubbling along for eight years and there has been an obvious divide in the community over the development," he said.

Wattle Grove Action Group spokesman Clive Garnham welcomed the news but felt for elderly residents who were hopeful the development would proceed.

"Sense has finally prevailed in the issue of the proposal to re-zone the rural land at Lot 500 Gavour Road for urban type uses that has been championed by some of the Shire of Kalamunda for so long," he said.

"We applaud the minister for his considered rejection of this and yet at the same time feel for the elderly of the Shire of Kalamunda who should rightly feel let down by their representatives on council.

"For too long some of these councillors and shire staff have staked their reputation on their wholehearted support of

what has proven to be a flawed proposal to the exclusion of all other alternatives.

"In the aftermath of this obvious failure by the Shire of Kalamunda, there will have to be some resignations."

Developer Ross Leighton said the decision was a disappointing day for aged care in WA.

"I don't think it has been a fair evaluation of community needs and I believe very strongly that the outcome of this to date has been strongly influenced by the Wattle Grove Action Group," he said.

"I will not be letting this lie and Mr Day will have to answer for his decisions."

Mr Day said there were other possible alternatives to progress the development of residential aged care facilities in the Shire of Kalamunda.

"I have advised the shire that I will do whatever I reasonably can to assist in progressing the development of such

sites for this purpose."

"Whether a changed use for this site is appropriate in the medium to long term will depend on future planning decisions and investigations."

Mr McKechnie said Mr Day had given a commitment to expedite the development of aged care facilities in the shire to address community concerns regarding the lack of such

facilities.

"There are many who are anxious to get more aged care facilities in the shire," he said.

"The Planning Department has said it will assist us in developing the Wilkins Road aged care development in Lesmurdie, which is an ideal spot for more aged care places but the big problem is finding someone to put money into it."

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