

Dear Planning Department,

Re: PA 249

We, the undersigned residents, object to the proposed Chi Wah Wah Town camping and music event, scheduled over three days, from February 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017 on Yandoit Creek road.

Our objections are on the basis of:

1. high fire risk and safety concerns for both attendees and community residents;
2. prolonged high levels of noise for community residents, farm animals and native fauna;
3. vehicle access dangers;
4. environmental impacts;
5. impact on farming zone;
6. previous experience of damage caused by similar 'rave' party event in the vicinity;
7. inconsistencies in application;
8. the impact of a large event being held in a small village community;
9. limited notification of the event amongst local residents;
10. loss of income and reputation for established B&B's in the area;
11. emergency services concerns.

### **1. High fire risk and safety concerns for both event attendees and community residents**

February is peak fire danger season. The CFA has already advised higher than usual fire danger this coming season as a result of abundant flammable material after heavy spring rains. Our local brigade advise that it would be impossible for so many people to be safely evacuated from the event location in a short space of time if a fire were to start, especially when fanned by high winds which often occur in this area. On a 95 acre property it would be difficult for 1 fire truck to 'oversee' the whole site. So if a fire was lit by a cigarette butt 90 acres away from the truck, it would be 'out of control' before it could be reached. The worst case scenario (and most likely if a fire started) is a fire fanned by winds straight through the forest directly lining up Hepburn, Daylesford and beyond. Is it worth the risk?

Our CFA comprises local men and women who volunteer in cases of fire. They will be busy enough during this fire season without the extra responsibility of an influx of 1,200 people, plus 200 crew, from outside the area. We are concerned to ensure that our volunteer fire fighters are not putting themselves in danger with the possibility of a catastrophic fire spreading across the region, brought about partygoers drinking and potentially drug-taking over the course of three days and nights.

### **2. Prolonged high levels of noise for community residents, farm animals and native fauna**

The noise of outdoor amplified music over three days and nights will travel well beyond the immediate boundaries of the event. Local residents who have experienced similar events, both locally and in other locations, indicate that such noise levels travel at least 15 kilometres. The applicants state that music will be played from 3.00pm on Friday until 3.00am Saturday morning- an initial 12 hour stint. This will be followed by a 32 hour non-stop music session, from midday Saturday until 8.00pm on Sunday evening, including all through Saturday night. Such noise levels over a prolonged period of time, without any break during the overnight sleeping period, have significant impact on all surrounding residents, on farm animals, and on the native fauna living in local bushlands and the adjacent wombat state forest. We understand that conditional approval has not been granted for this event from the Environment Protection Association (EPA).

### **3. Vehicle access dangers**

Access to the event site is via narrow one-lane dirt roads. These roads were closed to traffic during recent flooding and are vulnerable to falling trees and limbs during high winds and fires. These small local roads are maintained by both Mt Alexander and Hepburn Shires. During a previous camping and music event held in the vicinity, cars careered off roads into

the local creek and into paddocks with livestock, causing danger to events goers, local residents, farm animals and the landscape, as well as causing damage to farm infrastructure. Bridges along these local roads have weight limits which are likely to be exceeded with service trucks coming in and out. With anticipated numbers of 1,200 people, plus crew of 200, coupled with a two week set up time and one week close down period, this amounts to very high levels of traffic using narrow un-bituminized local roads.

#### **4. Environmental impacts**

The event site is bounded by local farms, bushland and residents as well as by Wombat State forest/Hepburn Regional Park. Significant areas of forest in Yandoit and surrounds are zoned with "Environmental Significance Overlays" to protect fauna and flora, eg Brushtailed Phascogales which have a conservation status of "threatened". They are breeding in our forests and, as extremely shy animals, are at risk with excessive loud and continuous music. Fires would destroy their habitat and breeding locations. Other native fauna including echidnas, koalas, kangaroos, wallabies and our amazing bird life are all put at risk.

#### **5. Impact on farming zone**

The event is situated within farming zone. Local farmers have sheep, cows and bulls, goats, chickens, bees and horses. Some animals are due to calve in February/March. High & sustained noise levels cause stress and alarm to animals, with potential for fences to be broken, and damage to the animals, farm infrastructure & passing vehicles.

#### **6. Previous experience of a similar large 'rave' party event in the vicinity**

A similar rave party event was held in the neighbourhood several years ago over the new-year period with significant disruption to the community including: accidents on local roads; intrusive noise levels; congestion on local roads and difficulty for residents entering and exiting their properties; patrons camping along roads to avoid camping fees and using the local bush as toilets; and negative impacts on farm animals and local fauna. Local infrastructure is simply not built for heavy traffic. The police were called to attend on numerous occasions. A question of concern is: who pays for damages outside event boundaries?

#### **7. Inconsistencies in application**

The applicant refers to developing a relationship and/or partnership with the local community. However no approach whatsoever has been made to local residents of Yandoit, Werona and surrounds.

#### **8. The impact of a large event being held in a small village community**

This is a big event with a huge impact entering our very small rural village. The event raises policy and practice implications for planning and event management across both Mt Alexander and Hepburn Shires, given Yandoit straddles both shire's. Our recent community meeting was well attended, demonstrating high levels of concern across the entire community and surrounding neighbourhood about this proposed event.

#### **9. Limited notification of event amongst local residents**

It is our understanding that very few people impacted by the application have been notified by Mt Alexander shire- only those whose properties abut the event land. However the entire community of Yandoit and surrounds will be impacted by safety concerns, noise, traffic, farming livelihood and other issues raised in this letter.

#### **10. Loss of income and reputation for established B&B's in the area**

Visitors to local B&B's come to the area because it is a peaceful rural place. Excessive noise, heavy traffic and fear of fires will impact on these small local businesses in the immediate, and potentially in the longer term.

#### **11. Emergency services concerns**

We are advised that Castlemaine, Newstead and Daylesford police are not in favour of the event proceeding, with resources already stretched by their day to day operations. Nor are our local and regional fire brigades in favour of the event. In the case of medical

emergencies, such as snake bites and potential drug overdoses, access to the event site is complex and limited local resources would be stretched.

There does not appear to be net value to our community of this event. In addition to concerns outlined above in relation to PA 249, **we seek a meeting** with relevant officers and elected representatives, from both Mt Alexander Shire and Hepburn Shire, to discuss policy and practice in relation to large events being held in small communities.

We look forward to your response regarding the issues raised in this letter. For ease of contact with our community you are welcome to liaise with Nikki Marshall via email: [nikki.marshall@oases.edu.au](mailto:nikki.marshall@oases.edu.au) or via mobile: 0432 232 073.

Yours sincerely,