

McLaren Vale development to proceed

27 May 2011 by Jancis Robinson

You may remember [our story](#) last October about a major development plan for the northern limit of McLaren Vale on some particularly distinctive terroir.

I have just heard what happened yesterday from Dudley Brown, former chairman of the McLaren Vale Grape Wine and Tourism Association:

It is with regret that we advise you that the South Australian government has approved the sub-development of Seaford Heights, a brilliant site for viticulture at the gateway to McLaren Vale.

There is to be no further community consultation.

We have fought a long and difficult battle to have this land secured for viticulture, as it not only stands as a last barrier between our vineyards and the ugly suburban sprawl to the north, but is the only small piece of a priceless geological formation in the Willunga Embayment, the heart of our vignoble.

These 650+ million year old rocks are of the same Umberatana group that re-emerges in the Greenock/Seppeltsfield/Marananga subregion of the Barossa, and on the eastern side of the North Mount Lofty Ranges at Clare, around Sevenhill/Mintaro/Polish Valley. You will be aware of the excellence of the wines produced in these places. A consortium led by the late Greg Trott and David Paxton managed in the 1990s to wrest some of the Seaford site from government, after having its residential zoning reversed to agricultural purposes. As this Gateway Vineyard matures, we know this geology is capable of producing amazing wines, with its proximity to the cool humidity of the Gulf St Vincent (patron of vines growers) offering a softer 'Vales' point of difference to the more austere wines of Clare and the charcuterie-and-panforte offerings of the Barossa outcrops.

Until these houses actually begin to appear - the development should be gazetted by government by the time you read this - we remain hopeful that our outrage will see this cash-strapped, hubristic government change its mind.

The best extant summary of our plight, written by Philip White, a local resident and campaigner against this development from the beginning is [here](#).

To judge from all the comments at the bottom of Philip White's account of the sellout, this is clearly a decision that is hugely unpopular.