**Boundary battle looms**

Surf Coast celebrates as Bellarine fight brews

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MEMBERS of the Surf Coast community gathered in celebration of the state Planning Minster’s decision to save Spring Creek at the weekend, but another boundary battle is still being fought on the Bellarine Peninsula.

More than 10,000 people living on the Bellarine have signed online petitions calling for the state government to protect town boundaries as part of the Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) process.

Planning Minister Richard Wynne announced in April that Torquay’s boundaries would be set at Duffields Rd to prevent housing developments in Spring Creek ­valley.

On Saturday, the Surf Coast Energy Group held a celebration for the “momentous outcome”, featuring live music, art and guest speakers.

Ocean Grove Community Association (OGCA) chairman Phil Edwards said the Spring Creek decision had instilled hope back into the Bellarine community.

“The decision made by the minister in the Surf Coast has given us some confidence as has the comments made by (Bellarine MP) Lisa Neville and the Premier,” Mr Edwards said.

“The state government said they would listen to the community and we have had over 8500 people voicing that they don’t want the boundaries expanded and we expect they would be listening to that community sentiment.”

The Bellarine DAL decision has been subject to major delays after the government’s decision to appoint an advisory committee to consider submissions and present a final report.

Public hearings began in April and are expected to continue up until June 9.

“There are a number of developers with expert witnesses, but we are hopeful that the minister will take a similar position as he did on the Surf Coast,” Mr Edwards said.

In Ocean Grove, the main concerns are for the land to the west of Grubb Rd, east of Banks Rd and to the north between the current Oakdene housing development and the Bellarine Highway.

“They want to expand the town in three directions with significant parcels of land for housing developments,” Mr Edwards said.

In its petition, the OGCA stated the need to “stop the sprawl … to retain the seaside town and natural environment we all love.”

The St Leonards community has also launched a petition, which is nearing 2000 signatures.

“The combined Bellarine Community Associations … support the St Leonards town settlement boundary as depicted in this petition,” organisers of Protect The Bellarine said.

“We believe the town settlement boundary should be retained and reinforced.”

According to the Change.org petition, a total of four developments have already been proposed outside the current St Leonards boundary.

A final report is set to be handed to the Planning Minister by July 8.