

## Victorian Shadow Minister for Planning visits Skeleton Hill, Chiltern

Local member for Benambra, Bill Tilley MLA, recently arranged for the Victorian Shadow Minister for Planning, Matthew Guy MLC, to visit Skeleton Hill and meet with representatives of Friends of Skeleton Hill, who are opposing a proposal by Cemex Australia to start a new quarry on the hill, just outside Chiltern township.

The two parliamentarians were able to listen to Friends of Skeleton Hill concerns, and view both the existing nearby quarry and site of the proposed new quarry on Skeleton Hill near Chiltern. In absolutely ideal weather, they marvelled at the views of the surrounding countryside that can be seen in almost any direction from the summit of Skeleton Hill, which would become part of the proposed quarry.

Friends of Skeleton Hill made it quite clear to both Members that they are not opposed to quarrying in general, rather, that they are opposed to the site chosen by Cemex for their proposed new quarry. Cemex and their predecessors have operated the existing nearby quarry for over twenty years, apparently without local residents having any significant concerns. The existing quarry area was included in the Chiltern- Mt Pilot National Park when it was created in 2002. The quarry operation has been allowed to continue for some years by Parks Victoria who have now decided that the existing lease will not be extended beyond late 2009.

Unfortunately, according to Friends of Skeleton Hill spokesperson Graeme Charles, “the site chosen by Cemex to replace the existing operation, in terms of its visual impact alone, is the worst possible site they could have selected. Skeleton Hill, and in particular its western extremity where the quarry would be located, is clearly the most dominant and significant landscape feature near Chiltern.” Mr. Charles went on to say “there are many issues associated with the new quarry proposal, other than visual that cause us concern, but it is the damaging impact that the quarry, should it receive approval to proceed on Skeleton Hill, will have on the visual amenity currently provided by the Hill, that is our greatest concern. If anything is to happen to that part of Skeleton Hill, rather than allowing a quarry to destroy it, the hill would make a wonderful and logical addition to the National Park.”

Both Mr. Tilley and Mr. Guy, indicated to Friends of Skeleton Hill how important it would be to encourage those who are going to be involved in deciding the outcome of this proposal, to actually visit the site before making any decision. Friends of Skeleton Hill will be meeting with the Victorian Minister for the Environment shortly, and encouraging him to pay a visit to Skeleton Hill and Chiltern is likely to be number one item on the agenda.