

## Book review

### THE FUTURE OF THE FRINGE: THE CRISIS IN PERI-URBAN PLANNING

By Michael Buxton and Andrew Butt

2020. Published by CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne. 184 pp.

Paperback, AU\$59.99, ISBN 97811486308958

‘Peri-urban’ refers to land at the perimeter of a city and its suburbs, i.e. the suburban or rural interface. Seldom a precise line, this boundary is instead a dynamic one. On the suburban side, almost all of the original vegetation is replaced by houses and other buildings and sealed roads. Public open space, as sporting grounds and some remnant bushland, is either created or retained. The other side of this boundary is varied, consisting of land occupied by market gardeners, orchardists, flower growers, vigneron, poulterers, hobby farm enthusiasts, and softwood plantations, set in a district already largely cleared of its original vegetation.

Peri-urban landscapes are viewed by government as land awaiting development. The land-planning bodies set up by government to dispose of land tend to be populated by those with an interest or experience in developing land (a euphemism for destroying the habitat of the native biota). It seems most unusual, perhaps unheard of, for an ecologist to be appointed to these planning bodies.

The impact of habitat fragmentation on the biota of suburban and agricultural landscapes is well researched compared to ecological studies of the peri-urban zone. Urban ecologists will find this book useful in planning research relevant to the peri-urban landscape. It presents a review of the international and Australian literature about policy, planning and risks (to humans), as well as the history of green belts. The authors, both associated with RMIT University in Melbourne, advocate for a more cautious approach so that all values of the urban fringe are optimised.

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