

# Councils fail to stop Alps national park

By JOHN LAHEY

Sixteen municipalities failed yesterday in an attempt to delay the State Government's plans for a vast national park stretching north-east along the Victorian Alps from Mansfield to the Murray River.

A five-member deputation to the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Land, Mr Mackenzie, and the Minister for Planning and Environment, Mr Walker, said later that if the park went ahead, its affect on employment would be harst, particularly in the timber and cattle industries, which would be outlawed over a wide area. Loss of jobs would spread to all other activities.

The president of Tambo Shire, Councillor Judith Henderson, said there would be "massive heart-break." Others in the deputation said some small towns could be shattered.

The deputation asked the Government for a two-year moratorium on any legislation to increase the size of alpine national parks so that full public debate could take place. It also asked for a detailed socio-economic study of the effects on various communities.

The deputation's leader, Councillor Rory Lumsden, president of

the Bright Shire, said Mr Walke and Mr Mackenzie had indicate that the legislation would go ahead in the spring.

They had rejected the call for socio-economic study, he said, on the ground that figures existed from a 1978 study that were updated.

They had rejected the call for public debate on the ground that the public had had two years which to submit objections.

Councillor Lumsden said towns such as Porepunkah, which had population of 300, often depended upon one main industry. For Porepunkah, this was the timber mill. If it shut, the town would take a "terrible bashing". Porepunkah's plight could be multiplied severer times, applied to other towns.

Councillor John Brewster, Mansfield Shire, said Mansfield along with other alpine, sub-alpine and lowland communities, were worried not only about the loss of jobs but the loss of citizens' dignity. This loss would not be solved by handing out social security.

The 16 municipalities protesting are Avon, Bright, Bairnsdale, Bairnsdale Town, Maffra, Mansfield, Myrtleford, Omeo, Orbost, Oxley, Rosedale, City of Sale, Tallangatta, Tambo, Upper Murray and Wodonga.