

# FACTS ON THE CURRAWONG PROPOSAL

## WHAT THE DEVELOPERS TELL YOU & WHAT YOU DISCOVER WHEN YOU VISIT THEIR WEBSITE

ECO-VILLAGES TOOK OUT A HALF PAGE ADVERTISEMENT IN THE MANLY DAILY (APRIL 12<sup>TH</sup>). THIS DOCUMENT ANALYSES THEIR CLAIMS

It is useful to visit [www.ecovillagecurrawong.com.au](http://www.ecovillagecurrawong.com.au) and look at the section IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS , particularly Appendix D which shows in visual form the scale of development at Currawong in plans prepared by Architectus.

**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** – *The current highly restricted public access to the site will be significantly expanded to include the entire beachfront above the high water mark and a minimum of 15 metres into the property.*

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** – If you compare Pages 2 & 3 of Appendix D you will see that a large section of the proposed public access zone is submerged under the waters of Pittwater. Another large section is taken up by the creek which the developers plan to open permanently to Pittwater. Furthermore the sandy platform north of the stream is to be removed (300 – 400 cubic metres) and the sand used to create an artificial sand dune for the remaining southern end of the beach. The Sand Dune Restoration Zone is also the Public Access Zone (Appendix D pages 4 & 6). In the Executive summary of the document Environmental Assessment Part A Page 7 it is claimed “**A key aspect of the project includes 1.1 hectares of public open space.**” Half of this public open space is in fact underwater. **There will be no public land at Currawong.** The entire site above high water mark will still be privately owned and as such any public access will be tightly controlled by the Community Association (the residents). Rules are being formulated to control the times you can use the special zone – access is denied before 7am and after 6pm, no ball games, signage dealing with limited noise and activities and so forth. (Environmental Assessment Document Part B Page 21).. The dune is to be planted with Spinifex type grasses and “**Managed access through this dune restoration area, to minimise disturbance of the restored dunes will be provided for the public.**” Because the public is accessing private land the control over the access to that land could be made so restrictive as to render the benefit useless. If the fifteen metres zone is taken up by a Spinifex planted sand dune then how much land is left available for public recreational use?

**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** – *There will be “A new public walking trail around the heritage cabins.”*

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** - If you look carefully at Appendix D Page 10 Subdivision Plan you will notice that the heritage cabins have now been subdivided into separate Torrens Title blocks of land (with a greatly expanded “building envelope” ) and that the “*public walking trail around the heritage cabins*” is actually part of a fire trail roughly 25 metres or so up the hill **behind** the newly created subdivision. The public will not have access anywhere near the cabins.

**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** - *“More than half of the almost 20 hectare property will be dedicated back to the people of NSW as national park.”*

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** – Under the present zoning **78%** of Currawong is zoned 9(b) County Open Space which restricts all development within that zone. ***The intent of the current 9(b) was that the land be transferred in ownership to Council for Regional Open Space.*** The developers want to remove this zoning and in return are offering **58%** of the site to be gifted to the national park. **They are effectively gaining 20% of the site to use it for an extended residential area plus open space for private recreational use.** Thus the cliff face and undevelopable land is gifted to the National Park and the developers gain an extra 4 hectares of useable land. Some of this rezoned land area is designated Zone RE2 – Private Recreation which allows “***Community facilities, recreation areas, recreation facilities (indoor), recreation facilities (outdoor) permitted without consent.***” (Source: Proposed State Significant Site Listing document Page 38).

Does this mean extra buildings on the flood plain? The development plans already show two swimming pools and a gymnasium pavilion in Zone RE2. Will this be joined by other sporting facilities such as squash courts, tennis courts, even a recreation club building in Zone RE2?

**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** – *More than 85% of the property will be open space.*

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** - 58% of the property will go to the National Park. But 15% will be residential and the remaining 27% is privately owned “open space” . The fact that the above mentioned pools and gymnasium pavilion are included in Zone RE2 clearly indicates the intended use for this “open space”

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**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** - *It will include the biggest environmental remediation of the property since it began operation in 1949...(and includes) re-instating the dune system.*

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** - A photograph circa 1920 (see website Documents Section Appendix T Page 26) shows Midholme with the tide almost lapping at its doors. Other photographs from the 1930s also show no sign of a natural dune system but rather a widely dispersed saltmarsh . The Graham Brooks and Associates report makes the point page 26 - “Figure 6 shows Midholme in relation to the shoreline in 1920, which implies little space existed between the shoreline in 1920 and the structures in the photograph.” So what exactly is implied by “*reinstating a dune system*” that never existed. Perhaps the answer lies in Appendix M Geotechnical and Environmental Advice Report Page 12. “*We understand that a beachfront levee is to be maintained and, thus, that flood water velocities over the Alluvial flats will be low.*” Well I guess that takes care of climate change.

**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** – *No more than 24 new homes occupying less than 5% of the entire property.*

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** – **The building development envelope** for these 24 new homes including the building development envelope for the “heritage cabins” but excluding Midholme amounts to **1.07 hectares. This is at least ten times the current building footprint.** (And this does not even include the planned 25 metre lap pool, the 10 metre kiddies pool and the pavilion housing the gymnasium which **adds even more area to the development footprint.** Compare Appendix Q Page 41 with ditto Page 39 to appreciate the full impact of this proposed development.

The proposed rezoning allows the developers 8.39 hectares of land. Almost one third of this area will be taken over by Torrens Title subdivisions for housing. Around one third cannot be developed because it is either creek or now part of Pittwater. Part of the remaining area on the floodplain is potentially capable of being developed into indoor and outdoor recreational facilities without consent. The developers have sought to maximize the subdivision and use of the developable land at Currawong.

**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** – There will be “*Homes of environmentally sustainable design and minimal visual impact from Pittwater*”.

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** – The developers are not building the houses – they are selling blocks of Torrens Title land which includes Midholme and the historic union cabins. Midholme is heritage listed but the cabins are (at present) not listed. Certain guidelines will be drawn up to recommend that the new houses conform to ecologically sustainable design principles but ultimately it is the Community Association that will decide if the individually proposed building plans are acceptable or not prior to the plans being submitted to Council. What you discover in Appendix D Page 11 “Building Height Plan” is that the most visible housing along the beachfront and stream has a height limit

of 8.5 to 9.5 metres above ground level. ***“Dwellings will generally be two storeys in height, but given the slope of many of the lots on the hillside, the height limit up to 12 metres is nominated for some of the lots”***. ( Source: Important Documents - Environmental Assessment Part B Page 70). The current beachfront Managers’ cottage and storage sheds at Currawong will be demolished and replaced by 3 new houses (Lots 1 – 3) which can be **double** the height of the current buildings. It is claimed there will be minimal visual impact when viewed from Pittwater. Five new houses (Lots 21 – 25) will be built adjacent to the beach and stream where no development exists today. These houses will be built on piers 1.5 metres above the floodplain to a maximum height of 8.5 to 9.5 metres above ground level. It is claimed there will be minimum visual impact when viewed from Pittwater. They will be accessed by a raised pathway above the floodplain. Behind them will be (initially) two swimming pools and a pavilion style gymnasium. A geotechnical report recommends the pools are built partially above ground level because of the shallow water table. The Community Association may want floodlights for night swimming perhaps? It is claimed there will be minimal visual impact from Pittwater.

**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** – *Important heritage buildings including Midholme farm house and nine cabins are to be refurbished and upgraded.*

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** – All of these buildings are to be subdivided into Torrens Title allotments and **sold** to private individuals.. A building development envelope for the cabins has been allocated which is approximately double the current building footprint and a height limit of 7 metres has been allocated for the “refurbishment”. (Appendix D Page 11). The historic 1950s outhouses will be demolished yet ***“The refurbishment and upgrading of the cabins is to be sympathetic to the scale and character of the cabins. Cabins may be extended within the building envelopes for the heritage lots with similar scaled pavilion forms”***. (Environmental Assessment Report Part B Page 69). One cabin is to be relocated. So you can build up and you can build out and you can relocate yet still retain the historic integrity of a 1950s union holiday cottage cluster? Remember that each cottage is to be privately owned so each extension is likely to be different, particularly given the different building envelopes for each cottage.

**WHAT THEY TELL YOU** – *Holiday letting (will be) maintained, enabling continued access for visitors to appreciate this unique site.*

**WHAT YOU DISCOVER** – Here it gets confusing. ***“Kenny’s cabin may well be utilized and adapted for a permanent caretaker and/or reservation office for the holiday lettings.”*** (Appendix L Page 45). ***“The historic ‘Midholme’ will be retained for residential occupation with its visual and spatial relationship to the beach, to Pittwater and the open grassland on the valley floor undiminished”***. (That is a little strange considering the Heritage listed Midholme building will be facing five two storey houses,

two swimming pools and a gymnasium complex directly opposite). **There is no indication on the developers' website that Midholme will be available for holiday lettings as is the situation now.** Lucky new owner.

Let's consider the cabins - probably only eight will be available for 'holiday lettings'. *"The holiday cabins will be maintained by each owner and will be available for holiday rentals to be managed by an agent/site caretaker."* So you have just purchased a cabin on a Torrens Title block of land at some considerable expense. You are permitted to modernize it by building up and adding on at more expense and now you have to make it available for holiday lettings! What constitutes a holiday letting? One week? School holidays? The developers' website does not specify but you can bet it won't be 365 days a year as is the current situation! And how much 'heritage' is left if the cabins are not protected by heritage listing?

## **TRAFFIC AND ACCESS**

You are probably wondering how this new development will impact on Palm Beach and adjacent areas. The developers have come up with some rather novel suggestions in their Environmental Assessment Report Part B Section 5.6 (Pages 34 & 35)

*"Parking surveys conducted prior to and during the Christmas holiday period found an 'unrestricted' parking availability in the vicinity of Palm Beach of between 12 – 68 spaces"*

That is reassuring for the people who try to park in the vicinity of the wharf on any weekend. However it is intended to solve the problem by providing a Currawong Community boat.

*"The Community Association boat will have the advantage of alleviating pressure on the Palm Beach area. The potential locations **where residential and visitors could park their cars and be collected** include but would not be limited to Sand Point Palm Beach Careel Bay Stokes Point Paradise Beach Clareville Beach Salt Pan Cove Newport Bayview Church Point".*

I am sure the residents in those areas will be delighted. Of course constructing 24 new dwellings and "refurbishing" 9 cabins could have an impact too. The developers have an answer.

*"There are a number of wharf locations, which would be suitable during the subdivision works and building works at Currawong Beach. These include Church Point Sandy Point Careel Bay Palm Beach or Bayview."*

## CONCLUSION

**'It is proposed that the Minister is the consent authority for the Project Application for subdivision into 25 dwelling lots, 9 cabin lots and 1 community open space lot and related works including Community facilities, Pools, Pavilion'**

The developers also acknowledge there is **potential** to further develop the site albeit 'limited'. Presumably this relates to building more structures on the curiously termed RE2 Private Recreation Zone or 'privately owned open space'.

The power to approve this subdivision or reject it rests entirely with one man, Frank Sartor - Minister for Planning and Minister for Heritage.

**His choice is to approve a private enclave within a National Park for a privileged few or to reject the subdivision and work towards acquiring the site for the National Park so Currawong is enjoyed by all citizens of this state now and in the future.**

**We hope he does the right thing.**