



Council under investigation

Patrick Thompson

HUGE protest meetings about high rise and ad hoc planning meetings, along with often secret development decisions have brought a total of over a 1000 people to public meetings in Ulladulla and Huskisson since May 28 2007, whilst some 6,000 have signed a petition calling upon Local Government Minister Lynch to sack Council. This Council has notched up some troublesome firsts.

"This is the worst Council in 50 years" says John Hatton.

The performance of this Council from the outset was destined to raise public scrutiny following the election of a mayor and his council majority team in a campaign that was financed by \$91,000 of contributions by developers.

Then as time progressed, the sale of millions of dollars of public land at prices adding up to millions of dollars below

market value brought strong criticism.

As former independent MP and anti-corruption campaigner, John Hatton told the *NBT*, "The Mayor's team sold Huskisson Public Car Park to Huscorp for less than market price then rezoned it to make it at least twice as valuable. In Nowra they sold 6,000 sq metres of public land to Huscorp for \$990,000 when others offered \$1.86 million." According to Hatton, it was "Not a bad deal, except of course for us ratepayers" and, "They threw in the use of another 3,000 sq metres for free in a prime site".

Now after months of campaigning by the Green's Councillors, the Shoalhaven Action Campaign (SAC) and others in the community, the Department of Local Government has finally acted and launched an investigation into the Huscorp proposal and Council's processes. As retiring Councillor and now Mayoral Candidate Richard Bates states: "After months of campaigning

in opposition to the Huscorp proposal and Council's processes concerning the Bridge Road 'hotel' site, the Department of Local Government has finally acted on our submissions and the representations of others in the community and launched an investigation.

This was the subject of a detailed complaint we made to the Best Practice Review of Council and it seems that they have taken up most of our points of concern, namely:

- * Why Council accepted Huscorp's proposal when they did not lodge an expression of interest in time

- * Why Council selected Huscorp as the preferred purchaser

- * Why Council is selling community-owned land at a substantial discount

- * Why Council is granting Huscorp an easement over Council's land without payment

- * Why Council ignored its own legal advice over valuations

- * Why Council did not consult

with the community properly

But mainly, and against legal advice to the contrary, why Council decided to proceed with the sale despite significant doubt

over whether the land had been classified correctly." (See the letter from the Department of Local Government reproduced in this issue, on page 2.) ■

EDITORIAL

The dominoes are falling. Following Stockland's withdrawal from its Nowra expansion, the dreadful gateway hotel deal with Huscorp is unravelling.

But this is much more than a failure of developer-driven policy of the Shoalhaven Independents. This is gross incompetence beyond the achievements of Shellharbour Council.

It is also willful misconduct, on an extraordinary scale. We are accustomed to watching theatrical councillors prance and rant about 'bureaucrats' when confronted by official advice of the illegality of their plans for allowances and other schemes. What they have done in relation to Huscorp is based on the same willful notion that the law can to be ignored. Mr Watson and his team knew last year that this deal for the gateway hotel with Huscorp was in trouble because the land was community land and needed reclassifying... but they chose to go on without changing the land zoning in the belief that they could get past the law unnoticed. Knowing that the community, if asked, would be strongly opposed to their scheming.

What unravels is much more than the hotel deal. The grand "knock 'em down, price and land" strategy has had its eyes on a swathe of Nowra across Bridge Road, down to the Nowra pool and riverfront. We are dealing with calculated misconduct in pursuit of a privately conceived strategy to do great damage to this town, over whose decline this push have presided for too long.

Such misconduct will cost us all, as ratepayers, a lot of money. It must end. It is time to get the Watson team out of the way so the whole community can develop a new and positive future for Nowra from Stockland to Junction Street and on to the river. Watson's team threw away community visions in 1999. That must not happen again.

STOP PRESS

MATTER NOW TO GO TO ICAC

Following complaints to the Department of Local Government regarding the alleged caucusing of Watson's Shoalhaven Independents Group before then adopting the Ulladulla DCP, the Department has now forwarded the complaint to ICAC. The complaints are believed to have come from Green's Councillor Richard Bates and

Mayoral Candidate Dennis Argall.

"It must only be a matter of time until a full public inquiry is initiated," Councillor Bates told the *Bush Tele*, "although the Director-General has made it clear to me that there will be no intervention before the election. The Department will give the electorate a chance of making regime change first."

THE ONUS NOW IS ON THE ELECTORS TO MAKE THOSE CHANGES.



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Responsibility for political comment in this pre-election issue of New Bush Telegraph is taken by Patrick Thompson, editor.

LETTERS

RIVER UNDER STRESS

The Shoalhaven River is under stress. The saline areas are moving upstream so we'll get jellyfish again above the Shoalhaven River Bridge- all because the Sydney Catchment Authority is pumping our water to Wollongong and Sydney and topping up the environmental flow in the Hawksbury- Nepean system and we are still only receiving 90ML/day as an environmental flow. This flow indicates a drought mode and is all the river has ever been entitled to receive. New flows of up to 450ML/ day have been agreed on but not yet implemented. Lack of fresh water in the river means the oysters will suffer from winter mortality again unless we can get a fresh moving down the river.

The banks are eroding partly due to wave action from boating activity. Wake boarding could take place in areas where the cliffs come down to the water line or at low tide where there is a beach.

We need the NSW Government to adopt the Boating Management plan for the river and we need SCC to call for gazettal of the Estuary management plan for the Shoalhaven River so funds can be allocated to help prevent erosion.

Volunteers from Shoalhaven Riverwatch inc are sick to death of planting mangroves and she-oaks and having them destroyed by wave action caused by irresponsible boaters.

Patricia Mason
Nowra

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK

Picked up a copy of the Bush Telegraph on a recent trip through Bomaderry - great to hear of all the great work going on to protect the Jervis Bay area (where i had my honeymoon!) really important action.

David Newell
Far South Coast Landcare, Bega

Greens endorse Bates for mayor

Patrick Thompson

FOR the first time Shoalhaven Council has a Green's candidate endorsed as a Mayoral Candidate. "I am completely disenchanted with the present Council. I am standing for Mayor to offer the community an alternative leadership based on integrity. I will provide honest representation, true accountability and support progressive economic growth", Councillor Bates told the *Bush Tele*.

In Council over the last four years Richard has been one of the few voices of reason, listening to the community and working for sound planning to protect our heritage and environment.

Along with the Green's team in Ward 3 (see page 7), Councillor Bates told us, he is committed to a positive agenda that:

- ✓ Diversifies the local economy
- ✓ Connects people and places, with more shared pathways
- ✓ Provides long term protection of our rural land

- ✓ Doesn't receive donations from developers
- ✓ Retains village values and heritage
- ✓ Values real input from residents into local planning
- ✓ Plans for climate change and the effects of peak oil
- ✓ Gives proper and due emphasis on the environment.

Based on their record, the Bush Tele believes the Shoalhaven Greens have much to offer a future Council and Councillor Bates is a worthy Mayoral Candidate, who has already served a four-year term on Council with distinction. ■



Photo: Michael Van Ewijk

08-07-22

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dlg

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YOUR REFERENCE CONTACT: David Alderman
02 4428 4190

Mr Russell Pigg
General Manager
Shoalhaven City Council
PO Box 42
NOWRA NSW 2541

COPY

22 JUL 2008

Dear Mr Pigg

I am writing in regard to Council's proposal to sell certain Council owned land described as the "Nowra Hotel site" to Huscorp Propriety Limited (Huscorp).

The Department has now examined the information regarding this matter, which Council has supplied in response to the Department's recent requests.

That examination has revealed that some if not all of the land that Council has resolved to sell to Huscorp is classified as community land under the *Local Government Act 1993*. This resolution to sell appears to be a direct contravention of section 45(1) of that Act, which provides:

A council has no power to sell, exchange or otherwise dispose of community land.

I am concerned that Council resolved to sell the land despite being provided with legal advice that reclassification of at least some of the land was essential in order for the sale to lawfully proceed.

I wish to draw to the attention of all councillors that a breach of section 45(1) may constitute "misbehaviour" in terms of section 440F of the Act.

I also wish draw to the attention of all councillors and staff section 435(1) and 435(2) of the Act, which relate to surcharging. They provide:

(1) If satisfied that any expenditure or transfer, or any entry in a council's accounts, has been incurred or made in contravention of this or any other Act or of any regulation in force under this or any other Act, a Departmental representative may:

- (a) disallow the expenditure, transfer or entry, and
- (b) surcharge the amount of the disallowance on the councillor, the general manager or any other member of staff of the council by whom the expenditure, transfer or entry was incurred or made or ordered to be incurred or made.

(2) A Departmental representative may also surcharge on a councillor, the general manager or any other member of staff of the council the amount of:

- (a) any deficiency or loss incurred by the council as a consequence of the negligence or misconduct of the councillor, general manager or member of staff, or

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(b) any money which ought to have been, but has not been, brought into account by the councillor, general manager or member of staff.

I also have concerns regarding the process Council has followed in selecting Huscorp as the preferred purchaser and the terms of the sale contract. Those concerns include:

- There does not appear to be any documented account as to why Council invited Huscorp to present its development proposal when Huscorp did not lodge an expression of interest on the advertised proposal by the advertised deadline.
- There does not appear to be any documented account of the basis upon which Council selected Huscorp as the preferred purchaser of the site.
- There does not appear to be any documented account as to why Council is prepared to sell Council owned land at a substantial discount to market valuation.
- There does not appear to be any documented account as to why Council is prepared to grant Huscorp an easement over the city administrative centre site without payment despite a valuation report indicating that the value of the right of way is substantial.
- Council appears to have failed to heed its legal advice to consider obtaining further valuation advice, inviting those who had lodged an expression of interest to consider lodging an amendment to their proposals in light of Council's decision to expand the site area, and to appoint a probity manager to oversee the selection process.
- Council appears to have ignored its Community Consultation Strategy in that the development that is now proposed by Council and Huscorp bears little resemblance to that described in the advertisement for expressions of interest.

I require written confirmation that Council will not sell or otherwise alienate the land in question until such time as the land has been reclassified as operational land, as required by the Act.

I also recommend that Council reconsider its decision to sell the land to Huscorp in light of the concerns set out above.

I ask that this letter be tabled at the meeting of Council scheduled for 3.30pm today.

Yours sincerely

Garry Payne AM
Director General

Shoalhaven... The Future

Dennis Argall

I AM an independent candidate for Mayor in the Shoalhaven from 2008 to 2012. Local government here (and elsewhere) is in great need of reform. The Shoalhaven can lead this process.

I have called my project Shoalhaven 2020. (See my web site at <http://shoalhaven2020.net/>

We have seen the Prime Minister's 2020 Summit but cannot expect rain to fall locally from that any time soon. Energising community into thinking far ahead is critical, we will need local 2020 processes. We tend too often to consider local government a lowly business, but in fact it is in our local world that we are going to have to encourage communities to solve many rapidly arising problems which are simply not solvable by national policies.

In May I set out foundation principles of transparency, accountability, integrity leadership and community.

I have experience in working with communities, in making and implementing large areas of government policy. We have come through a period in national history in which communities have become more distrustful and more

alienated. If we do not reform local government, if we do not get communities trusting themselves, we are in big trouble as problems of the economy, fuel prices, the environment and social disruption grow in these next few years.

In June 2008 the NSW Department of Local Government published a binding 'Model Code of Conduct' for local government. This document provides principles and defines how elected councils and staff should conduct themselves and see their roles. The Model Code still leaves great freedom for individual councils to build their own structures and ways of doing business.

If I win the mayoral race, I will need to forge good relations with an elected council working as a governing body. I think it is important that we shift in that kind of collaborative direction, away from a mini-parliamentary adversarial style of discussion.

My intention is to renovate council process and priorities according to principles that have been neglected to date. This will require a clear presentation to the elected council of packages of persuasive merit... If I am elected these will be recognisable as matters I have

advocated and will thus be matters for which I will have a mandate.

The whole community has to discover the possibility of doing things in a different way and *people have to see that change can be a happy process, not a threat*. I have had to make changes in workplaces before. It is not simple, many people fear change... and many discover with surprise how nice change can be. In any case, change is being thrust upon us with the state of the economy, energy costs, etc.

Some reforms are achievable by agreement on ideals and forms of conduct. However, those things have to be supported by new systems and rules.

There will be urgent and routine business before council through this process. Steps 1, 2 and 3 should be in place as swiftly as possible and should inform council deliberations while the rest of this review and redesign process flows. The objective of the review and redesign is a council that is more efficient, more productive and better able to meet the needs of community. ■



5 pillars of productivity

Dennis Argall

A design for transparent and accountable local government in the Shoalhaven connected to community and consistent with the Model Code of Conduct. The foundations for these elements of good government need to be agreed and embarked upon in the first 100 days.

Editor's note

Dennis Argall has been a contributor to the NBT and is on leave from his post as honorary Web Editor of this newspaper since announcing his intention to stand as a candidate for Mayor and councillor in Ward 2 in the forthcoming Shoalhaven City Council elections.

This paper does not shy away from supporting Dennis Argall's candidacy or of other candidates including those independents standing with the support of the Shoalhaven Action Campaign (SAC), or The Greens. We believe all these candidates have something positive to offer the City and are people of good will. We wish them all luck.

Shoalhaven 2020: Specific Commitments

Dennis Argall

1 We have to have a broad and long term perspective. Shoalhaven 2020. Consider how much the world has changed in the past 12 years. We need to think at least that far ahead, three council terms.

2 We have to have council leadership, transparency and integrity such as to inspire and encourage investment here, in what is a going to be a difficult investment climate for some years.

3 We have to bring community and business together in the planning process. Strength in partnership.

4 We need to get Nowra properly in the framework of infrastructure planning for NSW and make it a hub for smart business as much as Hurstville, Chatswood and other hubs in the immediate Sydney area.

5 The forward plan has to take into account energy costs and climate change policies and impacts AND to find advantage in those

Specifics for consideration:

6 With an anticipated rise in petrol costs to as much as \$8 we need to rebuild the case for the railway to come across the river. I would like to see, by

2020, a station in the present Stockland carpark, an industrial line continuing to South Nowra and Flinders Estate. Later beyond. Every past negative on the railway has to be rejected in the new energy and climate change situation. Do not doubt the gravity or the serious need for very new thinking.

7 The future development of Stockland (or other) shopping mall needs to go up and over such a railway station and the highway, linking with the rest of the CBD

8 Parking areas in the CBD need to be developed upwards. The space above to combine residential and commercial.

9 Attractiveness and commercial viability of these new CBD precincts increased by power cogeneration projects within the precincts with consideration to be given to joint public-private partnerships

10 The health and security of the CBD thus enhanced by bringing people to live there, bringing the area to life. Requires attraction of new people, new smart industries.

11 Focus on pedestrian connection and human scale throughout the CBD, linking also down to the riverfront.

12 Retention of town built character and heritage.

1 Governing body	2 Common Portal	3 New Links to communities	4 Fairness Officer	5 Happy Staff
<p>The elected council is a governing body like the board of a large business and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make policies that reflect community interests and concerns; • ensure that council management and operating systems are productive and efficient; • approve finance; and • provide leadership in difficult times <p>— as required in the Model Code of Conduct;</p>	<p>One place where requests to council are lodged and viewable by everyone —</p> <p>Council officers will rank projects according to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • defined social and economic criteria • urgency. <p>Priority will thus be given to projects on a coherent basis: people will be able to see what has and has not been done and why. It will no longer be appropriate to ask elected councillors to intervene</p>	<p>The Shoalhaven is not a single community.</p> <p>In each of our towns and villages, communities need to build consensus about their socio-economic priorities, through democratic community process.</p> <p>Such collaborative outcomes form the basis of local development planning.</p> <p>Thereby the exhibition stage of plans and policy is reached with confidence of constructive conclusion</p>	<p>Appointment of an independent person alongside council as a mini-ombudsman — not to build another layer of organisation and control, but to encourage positive, fair and proper outcomes in all council dealings.</p> <p>A person you can go to if you think you are not getting a fair go</p>	<p>The workplace environment within the council needs a culture which emphasises staff motivation, teamwork and sense of purpose.</p> <p>Productivity depends on staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being proud of the coherence of the place where they work, • knowing their work is respected, • having the means and clear policy guidance to do their jobs, and • being free to achieve career ambitions while embracing the Model Code

Shoalhaven flows

Robert Thorne
Shoalhaven River Alliance

ANGRY reaction from the local community to the State Government's mismanagement of the Shoalhaven River seems to have elicited a positive response.

Those who peruse the Sydney Catchment Authority web pages will have noted that massive water transfers from the Shoalhaven River to Sydney during autumn and early winter have decreased significantly since mid-July. For 3 months to mid-July, 90% of the river flow into Tallowa Dam was pumped to the Sydney water supply system, providing 50% of Sydney's water consumption.

The euphemistically called "environmental flow" allowed to pass downstream from Tallowa Dam is 90 million litres per day. This sounds a lot, but in a river the size of the Shoalhaven, it is a mere trickle and is the sort of flow one can expect during drought. But just when these massive water transfers were taking place, the government was easing Sydney's water restrictions and increasing the environmental flow releases to the Hawkesbury/Nepean River system.

It is bad enough that Sydney has started consuming more water at the expense of the Shoalhaven, but it's environmentally reprehensible that the health of the Shoalhaven River

should suffer at the expense of allowing greater environmental flows for Sydney's river system. During the last year, diversions from the Shoalhaven have exceeded 200,000 million litres, yet the 'environmental' releases from Tallowa dam to the lower Shoalhaven River have been only 16% of that volume.

Early last year the government committed to increasing environmental flow releases down the Shoalhaven and limiting drawdown at Tallowa dam to 1 metre, permitting increased frequency of overflows at the dam. But this will not occur until current infrastructure works at Tallowa dam have been completed mid next year, and water restrictions in Sydney have been lifted.

However, the water restrictions in Sydney will not be reviewed until the overall level in Sydney's dams reaches 70%. When will that be? Currently, they are hovering around 66% due (to a large extent) to the massive transfers from the Shoalhaven during autumn and winter.

Local anger at this gross mismanagement of the Shoalhaven River translated into action during late June and July, with a strong attack on the government in parliament and critical reports in the local media including some well-researched letters to the editor.

By some strange coincidence the level of extractions decreased



Terry Barratt of the Shoalhaven River Alliance inspects a 90 million litres a day (ML/day) flow in the Shoalhaven River past Burrier weir in July. This is the current maximum 'Environmental Flow' released from Tallowa dam, regardless of whether inflow is 90 ML/day, 9,000 ML/day or any other figure for that matter! *Photograph, Rob Thorne*

significantly from mid-July!

Can we gain some heart from the possibility that our protests are not always to no avail?

If so, let us not leave the matter there. Mayor Greg Watson has, throughout the recent drought years, consistently promoted the view that Sydney has a right to our river's water and denied that recent massive diversions have

impacted negatively on the river. He has refused to speak out against the government's preferred treatment of Sydney residents to the detriment of the Shoalhaven River. The majority of Shoalhaven's current crop of councilors has consistently supported him in this regard.

Now is a perfect time for us to remind the current aspirants for local government office

about past council inaction. We need to let them know that we expect their commitment to demanding abandonment of the government's misguided and incompetent management of the Shoalhaven River and that they demand redoubled efforts on water re-use and storm-water harvesting – the only real answers to a sustainable water supply for Sydney. ■

ENVIROSCENE

World's freshwater in crisis

Bernie Clarke, Sussex Inlet

RIVERS are dying, the soil is poisoned, fauna and flora are disappearing, pollution mounts as world population expands at an alarming rate.

The world population has grown from 1 billion in 1800 to 3.5 billion in 1968, 5.3 billion to 1991 and 6.7 billion by 2008 according to the latest census.

In 12 years time the world population will have expanded to 9 billion, mostly in developing countries. Each year India's population increase by 19 million. Its population has now passed 1 billion people, nudging China's 1.3 billion.

A huge problem has emerged – how are we going to slake the thirst of 9 billion people in 2020 and beyond, as well as water for agriculture and the animals we eat. Only 1% of the world's water is drinkable and in Australia less than 1% of the treated drinking water produced is consumed by people, most of it used for lawns, bathing and doing household chores, such as laundry. According to the Department of Water Resources an 8 minute shower uses 70 to 160 litres, a single flush of the toilet up to 11 litres and a garbage disposal unit can use 30

litres a day. Just letting a tap run during teeth cleaning can waste 5 litres of water.

Outside the house the situation is even worse. Hosing the lawn, garden uses an average of up to 900 litres of water an hour and a sprinkler 1500 litres an hour. Australia uses the equivalent of 2000 litres of water per person a day – more than almost any other nation. The population of Peru is rationed to 2 litres per person per day – Australia has an abysmal water conservation record as the world's driest continent.

Population pressure has trebled water demand worldwide over the last three decades. Scientists calculating the amount of water required to put a range of food on the table said rice eaters and beef fanatics are sucking the world dry. CSIRO's Land and Water unit at Griffith University have shown that a single kilogram of rice takes 2000 litres of water to produce and beef requires a staggering 100,000 litres of water. The animals drink little water – most used to grow their food. At 3,500 litres per kilogram a chook is a water saving alternative to beef.

Without water, an

increasingly scarce and sought after commodity, there can be no food.

But the more and more mouths to feed, farmers are under pressure to increase production – and how else to do this but use more water.

Humans use 54% of all available fresh water flowing in the world's streams and rivers. We had better manage our


water if we are to survive into the next century. Scientist warn if water consumption continues to rise at present rates the world could run dry during the middle of next century.

It isn't how many people you have, it's what you do with the planet that counts.

BITTER IRONY: With world's diminishing fresh water, the 1,000 mile long Amazon

River, with one fifth of the world's fresh water, is belching 5 million gallons a second of its liquid gold into the Atlantic Ocean.

OUR BEST TAP WATER: Wine tasters agree the best tasting tap water comes from Bega, the sleepy cheese making town on NSW south coast, after sampling water from regions around Australia. ■



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Shoalhaven Action Campaign ready for the Council election

The Shoalhaven Action Campaign is supporting John Fergusson as a candidate for Mayor, along with teams of four Councillor candidates in each of the three wards of Shoalhaven City Council at the elections on 13 September.

ORIGINALLY formed in May 2007 as a response to Shoalhaven City Council's proposed plans for development in Huskisson and Ulladulla, SAC has evolved to cover the entire city.

John Fergusson who is a Vincentia resident, a local businessman and a foundation member of SAC said "The more we looked the more we found issues that should concern all voters in Shoalhaven. In attending Council meetings, holding discussions with elected Councillors and following issues through, we became alarmed at the way the current Council does its business. Accountability, Transparency and Integrity became our catchphrase and these sum up the issues of concern. We have put together a team of honest, experienced people from diverse backgrounds who are working hard to offer a viable alternative to the current Council."

All the candidates are Independent and, if elected, will not be expected to always vote the same way. SAC have developed a set of principles which the team have endorsed. These cover Governance, Transparency, Participation and Electoral Donations [and are included below]. "One of the principles under Governance is that Council will operate within legislative frameworks, meaning Council will follow the Local Government Act," Mr Fergusson said. "This basically means that Council will follow the law. It's incredible to think that they don't always do this as a matter of course but the Minister for Local Government has regularly instructed Council to reverse its decisions because it was not following the Act. There have been numerous public instances of Council acting shamelessly. SAC intends to stop the rot and restore the good name of Shoalhaven City Council."

Earlier this year the State

Government changed the legislation in relation to declarations of election donations and expenses. These changes were widely regarded as not going far enough. "All donations over \$1,000 have to be declared, which is welcomed, but the ridiculous thing is that they don't have to be declared until after the election. If it is assumed that there is nothing wrong with making electoral donations this has to be supported by full disclosure before an election so that voters can see who is donating to a political party or group of candidates." One of the SAC principles is that donations will be declared before an election. "We have challenged the Mayor, Greg Watson, to declare donations to his political party, the Shoalhaven Independents Group before the election but he has dismissed this. Given that he received over \$90,000 before the last election, most from property developers, that's not surprising." Electoral donations are used for advertising and the Mayor's party shocked people before the last election with the amount of their advertising. "We have a small amount of money, raised from art auctions, concerts, raffles, donations and the like but we can't compete with the amount the Mayor's party is likely to have," Mr Fergusson said. "We will be much more grass roots than that and depend on people's networks to get our messages out."

It's important that people think carefully when they vote. Group voting means that people can vote 1 above the line for a group of candidates. People can also vote 1, 2, 3, 4 for the candidates of their choice from among the various groups. "The problem with this is that due to preferences voting for an individual can have unintended consequences and lead to someone else from within that group being elected. There are instances of candidates being elected with very small



left to right: Mary Bloxsome, Laura Eringa, John Fergusson, Rebecca Rudd (Ward 2); see article for other teams.

primary votes but getting in on preferences," Mr Fergusson said. "People should either vote for a group or think very carefully about individuals and make a considered choice."

"I can recommend that people vote for the SAC team in their ward. We have a very balanced and experienced team of seven women and five men. In each of the three wards there is one candidate with experience as a Councillor. This is a real strength of our team who will be able to quickly adapt and work effectively for the whole community."

The SAC team are:

Patricia Mason is the lead candidate in ward one. She served as Councillor from 1995 – 2004 and has rarely missed a council meeting since. There is not a lot that Pat doesn't know about how Council operates. A Shoalhaven resident for 45 years Pat is well known throughout the city. She is currently President of both Shoalhaven Riverwatch and the Shoalhaven Art Society.

Michelle Spooner has a professional background in marketing and business development in education, financial services and health services working in both the private and public sectors. She has an active role in the community and will

bring experience in governance and strategic planning to her role as Councillor.

Barry Horton was born and raised in Nowra and worked in the local building industry before continuing his career in London. He has tertiary qualifications in adult education and works in occupational health and safety. Barry is interested in outdoor activities and supports a real solution to the North Nowra traffic problems.

Geoff Parry-Ewing completed his Higher School Certificate at Nowra High in 2007 and is currently studying at the Shoalhaven campus of the University of Wollongong. He is relishing the learning experience of a local government campaign and is committed to working for the needs of young people in the Shoalhaven.

As well as being a candidate for Mayor, John Fergusson is a candidate for Councillor in ward two. John has many years experience as a small business owner and extensive experience in positions of leadership in industry and community. John will work to restore the moral authority and good name of Shoalhaven City Council. He will end the secrecy and the divisive approach of the current council that has created so much community anxiety. John

will lead a council for all. He will ensure Council follows the rules and the State Government no longer has to intervene on a regular basis.

Rebecca Rudd has been a Greens Councillor for the last four and a half years and has decided to stand as an Independent with the support of SAC in ward two. She has a background in natural resource management and stood in 2004 because she loved where she lived and wanted to keep loving where she lived. In 2008 Rebecca's motivations are similar but now with the benefit of her experience.

Mary Bloxsome is a local Aboriginal woman from the "Jerrinja" community at Orient Point. She currently works for the South Coast Medical Service and has worked throughout the local area with young people and families. Mary will work for the whole community but believes it is important that the Indigenous communities have an elected representative on Council.

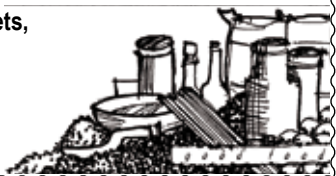
Laura Eringa has been actively involved in improving her local community since moving to the Shoalhaven in 1982. Since 2000, Laura has built and run a successful small business. Laura's Garden Café has become

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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Shoalhaven Action Campaign ...

continued from page 5

an icon in Sanctuary Point. She has a great capacity to get things done and will represent all parts of the diverse community which is the Shoalhaven.

Robert Miller leads the ticket in ward three. His family have been dairy farmers in Milton for five generations and he has tertiary qualifications in agriculture and business administration. Robert is on the board of the local Bendigo Bank and has a strong understanding of and commitment to meet the needs of local families and business.

Mark Hurley was previously a Councillor from 1999-2004. He understands how the current Council operates and how a decent Council should operate. Mark's motivation is to restore integrity and accountability and ensure Council's decisions are made in the interests of all, not just a few. Mark chairs a local Community Consultative Body.

Tracy Lumb works in community services in the Bay and basin area and has extensive understanding of community needs and networks. She wants the area to reach its full potential and the whole community to develop. Tracy wants to see appropriate industry providing full-time employment opportunities with the provision of services to cater for future growth.

Monica Taylor has a long history in public administration and believes good decisions follow sound policies and provide a fair go for all. She says that Council has a major role to play in promoting healthy, vibrant and harmonious communities rather than fostering division. Monica supports innovative enterprise like the Ulladulla Future Park.

Full profiles of the SAC supported candidates, along with policy statements are on the SAC website www.shoalaction.org.au

Shoalhaven Action Campaign Principles Endorsed by Candidates

The Shoalhaven Action Campaign promotes accountability, transparency and integrity in Council decision-making and supports community engagement in policy-making at the most opportune time. This will result in efficient and effective outcomes for the long-term social, economic and environmental well-being of the Shoalhaven. To achieve this goal, SAC will support

Councillors that carry out their duties as elected community representatives within the following principles:

Governance – how Council uses its authority and control in the public interest

- Councillors acknowledge, understand and operate within legislative and corporate governance frameworks, council policy and the public interest.

- Councillors understand and value that an essential element of good local government is respect for the independence of staff in providing apolitical, professional advice.

Transparency – ensuring Council is clear and accountable to the public

- All Council and Committee meetings will be open to the public except when matters concern individual staff or prosecution or where legislation requires the use of closed/confidential sessions.

- Councillors will be willing and able to publicly explain their decision-making, particularly where it is against professional advice from Council staff or external sources. Councillors' decision-making will be based on principles of governance, ethics and the wider public interest.

- Details of proposals for the sale of public land, including air space, shall be widely and freely available in sufficient time for considered public participation before decisions are made.

- Councillors will participate in effective two-way communication with all stakeholders and openly declare dealings with developers, builders and contractors over planning and development issues where variation/s to policy are sought.

Participation – ensuring the public have a role in the future of the city

- Councillors will promote the public's democratic right to participate at the most opportune time in policy making decisions that will shape the future of the city. Councillors will endorse policies that reflect community input.

- Councillors will seek public participation to inform appropriate development that reflects community diversity, protects the lifestyle of residents and the natural environment and caters for present and future needs.

Electoral donations – best practice

- All donations to Shoalhaven Action Campaign, or to individual candidates supported by SAC, of more than \$1,000 will be declared one week before an election. ■

Priorities wrong

Friends of Bomaderry Creek

COUNCIL'S obsession with the North Nowra/Bomaderry link road is an abrogation of its role in delivering a better system of roads and better traffic management for the commuters within and through the Shoalhaven according to Robin Moyes of the Friends of Bomaderry Creek.

"A link road will facilitate opening up of North Nowra and Bangalleah thus increasing traffic flows on both Illaroo Road and the Princes Highway rather than reducing them," he said.

The real answer to present and future traffic problems is a third bridge across the Shoalhaven River next to the present ones.

And if the current crop of councillors are really interested in short-term improvements, they would spend a few of the many millions they have earmarked for a link road on providing a foot-bridge and bus bay at the Illaroo Road Public School. This would put a stop to the morning traffic bank-up to the McMahoons Road roundabout.

That's the number one priority and it's in the full control of Council to achieve!

The next priority should be to lobby State and Federal governments to assist financially with a third bridge crossing of the river. For economic reasons and as the best short-term answer to local and through traffic needs this bridge needs to be built immediately adjacent to the present bridges.

It will require overpasses across the highway and Illaroo Road to pick up Nowra-bound traffic from those two roads and Bolong Road. The overpasses plus roundabouts would allow the removal of the two traffic light systems on the northern side and one light system on the southern side of the river, thus improving highway traffic flows as well as local traffic needs.

A new bridge with two south-

bound lanes, with provision for future expansion, would help overcome the frustrating blockages as three major roads converge from six lanes to two lanes.

This third bridge would also be an insurance against a possible disaster with the original bridge which is more than 125 years old and approaching its used-by date.

A diagram is provided indicating how improved traffic flows can be achieved. Hopefully it will stimulate ideas and debate on how we can better manage vehicle access to and over the river.

When council has dealt with these two practical measures to deal with today's traffic problems and provide for the future, they could then start thinking about link roads and housing schemes.

And if they were really genuine about the need for a link road here and now, they could start building one immediately along the most appropriate route, i.e., West Cambewarra Road.

But if council is honest with its ratepayers it would admit that a link road, whether using West Cambewarra Road or Pitt Street to Narang Road, will do little to ease peak hour traffic flows. The Maunsell traffic study, commis-

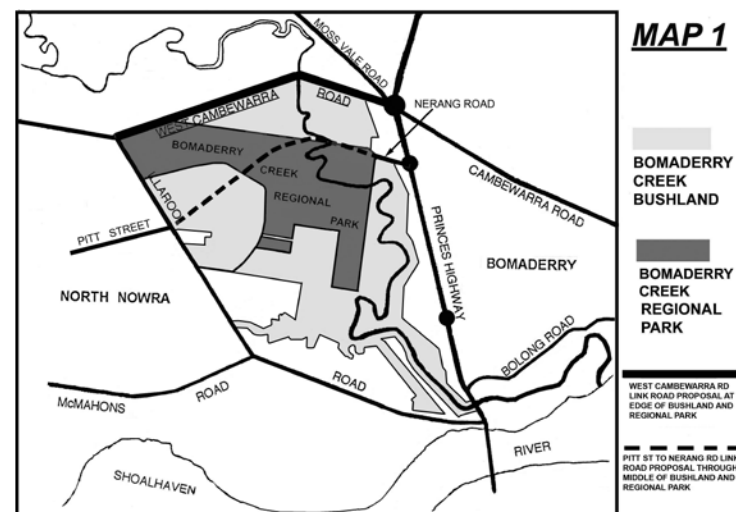
sioned by council, points out that by 2016 and with development indicated in the Nowra Bomaderry Structure Plan, the mean (average) vehicle speed in the study area during peak times will be little better than half the current speed, and little better than if no link road is built at all!

The Maunsell Study also says that any improvements in North Nowra traffic congestion will be at the immediate expense of increased congestion and delays on the highway and in Bomaderry and an increase in traffic use on the back streets of Bomaderry.

Bomaderry residents could legitimately ask why council is favouring North Nowra residents by stubbornly championing an expensive road option which will negatively impact already congested roads in the Bomaderry area

"Council has got to get its priorities right and stop trying to win an old argument they lost years ago," said Mr Moyes

"As well as inviting community comment, we urge the growing number of aspirants to local government office to let the community know their views on these options. Perhaps we can get a Council that listens to the community for a change," Mr Moyes concluded. ■



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Planning for Ulladulla

Amanda Findlay

ULLADULLA and districts has received much negative feedback of late.

A dying town with no future. No interest in the harbour, no jobs, no young people and so the list could go on. (Headlines from The Times)

One response to the problem has been an attempt to stimulate development through the encouragement of high rise and seeking large discount store investment to the area.

Another response is to increase aged care facilities- an option that fits with the aging population increase not just for Shoalhaven, but for all of Australia.

These plans have produced mixed reactions from the community from passive acceptance to outrage.

One proposition of recent times however has been the idea of the 'Future Park'. The idea to reuse the obsolete sewage works as a food producing and sustainability icon for the area has kindled interest from the community and business. It has also highlighted the need to be thinking about the future in ways different to what is currently the 'norm' and the joining of community forces that have in the past created an 'us vs. them' scenario.

Challenges for the future

Milton-Ulladulla emerged from a strong history of farming, forestry and fishing, industry that we can still identify with today.

We are also a sought after location for retiring Baby Boomers some of whom are recapturing memories of family holidays to Ulladulla. This in turn has led to a type of 'gentrification' which, places conflicting land-zone use pressure on the existing agricultural operational lands. Examples of this have been experienced in recent times i.e. trucks move through urban streets- a hazard, spreading of waste and fertilizing products- disrupting lifestyle. [Headlines from The Times]

It seems that a rural life somehow brings an expectation of 'quiet', which is not at all true as rural life always involves primary production at some level.

On the current path to the future - it appears that we can expect more of the same, further reduction in agriculture, fishing, forestry, little business interest in the town centres and a focus on aging facilities, one person described this to me as a 'Gods waiting room' phenomena.

Add to that Climate change, peak oil, and export of youth, dwindling business opportunities and loss of lifestyle. The future would appear bleak.

However, we are uniquely placed to deal with these challenges and come out on top.

What makes us unique!

Firstly acknowledging the environment around us, clean air, good rainfall, clean waterways, and proximity to ocean and wilderness, fertile agricultural lands, wildlife and biodiversity. Things that cannot be replaced once exhausted or removed. Science has not advanced far enough to mimic the extensive services offered to mankind from the natural world.

Studies have shown, that people who are unable to access places of wilderness or natural beauty still benefit, from a sense of connection to wilderness just by knowing that it exists. It is this environment that people want as a backdrop (direct or indirect) to their other activities and the grind of daily life, knowing that if they wanted to visit such a place for respite they could.

From this base, we can build a bigger picture, adding the many features of our existing industry.

- We catch our own fish
- Slaughter our own meat
- Have a beef cattle industry
- A dairy industry
- Vineyards
- Fruit and vegetable production
- Wildflower/Cutflower industry
- A forest industry
- A timber milling industry
- An emerging B&B industry

It is these threads that can be pulled together to play a bigger part in our future picture, and give us the unique ability to be a truly self-sustaining town.

Diversity and Sustainability: Opportunities for Small Towns

Ulladulla has not just 'died' overnight. The slow decline of our primary industries and the addition of new business have been unable to match the pace of growth. With poor community driven leadership, there has been little opportunity to identify the problems and look for the solutions.

If we look to Tasmania, they have managed to survive similar economic downturn and, pull together similar threads to re-invigorate themselves. By creating brand Tasmania, visitors have an expectation that Tasmania will deliver not just an outstanding wilderness experience but an additional fresh farm gate experience either in flowers, food or wine.

Tasmania calls it 'Artisanal Food Production' or boutique production. Value adding either on farm or through the use of local raw products in other local business. In turn creating a unique product and business that supports and enhances one another.

Turning threats into strengths is how we can pull our unique strings together and start to reinvigorate our towns and villages.



The Greens ward 3 candidates. Left to right: Gail Kecskes, Sarah Wilden, Amanda Findlay and Julie McKenzie.

Embracing change

Australia is currently experiencing an economic downturn, added to that insecurity about the future cost of fuel, food and climate change it would seem that the economic picture will not be changing for the better any time too soon. It then becomes our responsibility to imagine a future we want and make it for ourselves.

Blueprint Shoalhaven hosted a conference to which over 100 people from Shoalhaven attended, from all occupations. Dr Ellyard who facilitated the conference used phrases 'future makers' or 'future takers' and put together a transcript of the inputs from the day.

A recurring theme emerged throughout the section on 'how we see Shoalhaven in 2020', a theme that we are leaders in sustainable practices, a place for health and rejuvenation, quality food and attracting visitors who come here for a holistic well-being experience. A tourism industry that focuses on these aspects, will be well suited to the future, as we become more dependent on domestic tourist trade as international travel becomes a luxury that few will afford.

Using Dr. Ellyard's phrase, we can become future makers- making it for ourselves instead of future takers, struggling to keep pace and following others.

Embracing change will take a cultural shift and community leadership that is willing to take the leap and follow through. At the beginning of any process for change, is pain and fear of the unknown, so it also takes courage to create the agenda and then forge ahead against the tide of critics.

By embracing a self-sustaining future and creating it for ourselves, we have nothing to lose and everything to gain for the community. We come through the process invigorated and inspired, ready to face the challenges that lay ahead and with a willingness to experiment and look deep within our community to see where our failings may be

What can the chamber do?

The chamber along with other community representatives should have a leading role in the process of cultural change, from practical guidance to helping locate and establish

new business operators who can fill the niches created in a self-sustaining town.

□ An entity to seek funding for studies into how we can harness change.

□ Accessing Federal funding for struggling regional towns.

□ An insuring body to assist small farm operators become part of the 'self sustaining trail'

□ Encourage and actively seek expansion of a sustainable agriculture sector.

□ Support the establishment of new entities such as the 'Future Park' and whole food co-op.

□ Support the establishment of a food grower's network and 'artisanal' food production.

□ Encourage local councils to provide planning regulations that suit a sustainable town ethic.

□ Maintain activities such as the Food and Wine festival

□ Establish an 'Eco-tourism' industry that provides visitors with a holistic self-sustaining experience.

This paper is presented to you in the spirit of uniting Milton-Ulladulla to embrace a future for ourselves that makes us 'future makers' rather than 'waiters'. It is not the intention of the author to present a complete plan, but to raise the point that we have the unique elements that allow a plan like this to be a successful way forward, that will deliver benefits to all of the community. To help us in engage a collection of people who have the will and the skill to move us from a feeling of desperation to one of hope and inspiration through trialling methods other than the tired method of doze and develop that has not delivered ongoing beneficial outcomes. ■

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North Nowra/Bomaderry Link Road Saga

Terry Barratt
Chair, ACF (Shoalhaven)

THERE are a lot of people in the Shoalhaven unfamiliar with the history of the link road and the battle to save the Bomaderry Creek Bushland – a battle that is still raging and engaging the minds of the Nowra/Bomaderry community and would-be Council aspirants.

The Bomaderry Creek Bushland consists of a 250 ha expanse of sandstone environment encompassed by the Princes Highway, Illaroo Road and West Cambewarra Road forming a focus for natural area recreation between North Nowra and Bomaderry. Its obvious recreational attractions are boosted by its environmental attributes featuring a range of forest, woodland and heath habitats providing home for a high diversity of plants and animals including eight species of threatened fauna and three species of threatened plants. Many other rare plants and animals are found here. The most endangered species is the Bomaderry Zieria which is listed as protected in both national and state legislation and is totally confined to the Bushland.

The history of the fight for the Bushland is just one example of the effort, usually undertaken by a few people, so often necessary to turn around entrenched attitudes and produce long-term benefits for everyone.

Community effort over the past 20 years to protect the Bomaderry Creek Bushland from plans for roads and housing has grown into a huge battle with the Shoalhaven City Council. Council's single-minded pursuit of its objectives to build the road and urbanise the Bushland continues to this very day.

An account of events up until 1997 is documented in a paper by a previous well-known local resident, May Leatch, titled Bomaderry Creek Link Road: Urban Bushland Under Threat. This account is available from me for anyone wishing to gain an insight into the experience of a very brave Shoalhaven environmental pioneer.

Plans to provide a link road across Bomaderry Creek between the suburbs of North Nowra and Bomaderry go back more than 30 years. From the start, Council planned to extend West Cambewarra Road across the creek to the Princes Highway via an existing road easement (following an unformed access trail from the highway – see Map, page 6 in this issue).

A high-class residential subdivision along West Cambewarra Road in 1985 resulted in opposition to this proposal from the new residents which led to the selection of an alternative route from Pitt Street to Nerang Road.

At the time Council gave little attention to the environmental implications of this proposal. As information came to hand about the Bushland's

...the re-election of the Mayor and his political allies will only encourage them to remain wedded to their old ways...

natural values and as the details of the proposal became clearer, community concern grew over the likely impacts on the biodiversity and recreational values of the Bushland. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the adequacy of long-term planning for urban development and traffic management was questioned by the community, and the need to protect and properly manage the environmental qualities of the whole Bushland was advocated. In support of this view, all environmental studies commissioned by Council concluded that a route skirting the Bushland would be the only one that would keep it intact and would be least damaging from the environmental and recreational points of view.

A road cutting the Bushland in two would be a bad deal for the environment and the community's enjoyment of it and would create major management problems. It would destroy an Aboriginal relic site, cut through the Critical Habitat of the endangered Bomaderry Zieria (and pass dangerously close to some of the Zieria plants), cut through the habitat of the most northern occurrence of the vulnerable Nowra Mallee and destroy at least one site of this rare plant, impact on a whole range of other environmental values including the habitat of the vulnerable Glossy-black Cockatoo, Brittle Midge Orchid, Yellow-bellied Glider, and Giant Burrowing Frog, pass within a few metres of the Nerang Road picnic area (currently being upgraded at considerable cost by the NPWS) and alienate the northern one third of the Bushland. The road would also cut through the very popular walking track system built by community volunteers.

Regardless of the arguments against a link road through the Bushland, Council continued to press ahead with its plans and refused to consider any alternatives outside the Bushland. There is clear evidence that promises had been made to West Cambewarra Road residents and intending residents that a link road would never go past their houses. In 1993 Council gave itself approval to build the road and applied for a licence to Take-or-Kill endangered fauna – the last hurdle in the way of the road. To our utter amazement the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) gave its approval. In response to this dreadful decision, an appeal was immediately launched in the Land and Environment Court by May Leatch supported by the Australian Conservation Foundation. It was successful and is listed as the Leatch v NP&WS and Anor, 1993. This

case has become a precedent-setter for a number of international court outcomes based on the precautionary principle. It focussed wide attention on the Bomaderry Creek Bushland, elevated its conservation status and gave strong impetus to the campaign aimed at enhancing its protection and achieving a professional standard of management.

The campaign for the Bushland continued for another 8 years until the government in 2001 established the first 81 ha stage of the Bomaderry Creek Regional Park. At the time of the Park announcement the Minister for the Environment stated that "...this would put an end to the destructive link road proposal"

The establishment of the Park has led to a significant investment by the government in the upgrading of facilities and professional weed and feral animal control.

It had been confidently anticipated that the link road saga was over, but this was not to be. The Mayor commenced re-agitating for the road during 2005 and successfully achieved the strong support of Matt Brown, State member for the seat of Kiama, in 2006. The alliance of support between the Mayor and Matt Brown was critical and included an offer to swap some Council land for approval to construct the road. This led to agreement by the same Minister responsible for the establishment of the Park to consider the road proposal.

ABANDONMENT OF PRINCIPLE

To be prepared to revoke a part of a Park, established just over four years previously with a grand gesture about stopping the road, is a bewildering position to take. But to give any consideration to a proposal that would seriously degrade the values of a park established under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, and which would set a serious precedent for future park revocations, is a significant matter of great concern.

There are a number of hurdles Council is required to jump over before getting its way, including preparation of a traffic study and environmental assessment. The traffic study was completed more than 12 months ago and gives Council absolutely no support for its attempt to paint the road as a responsible and effective means of dealing with the current or long-term traffic issues. Their second attempt at an environmental assessment is currently in preparation (the first one was woefully inadequate). If it leads to approval of the development, an Act of Parliament will be needed



Photo: Terry Barratt

to revoke a part of the Park to permit construction of the road.

Predictably, Council's plans threaten to alienate community support for and future involvement in rehabilitation projects. For example, the Bomaderry Creek Bushcare Group has recently informed Council that the land subject to the land swap deal is heavily weed infested and that it will not undertake any rehabilitation work on this land other than for a specific site where the Bomaderry Zieria is under threat from weeds. The Group is not interested in helping Council fix up the land it is offering in return for a road that would have a serious impact on an area they have worked so hard to protect and restore over many years. The Government should also have no interest in taking on the costly management of this weed infested land unless it was to be offered with no precondition about the road.

With a fresh positive approach by our Council to the potential of the Bushland we would see it continue as a major natural botanic garden – a marvellous attraction for the local community and its visitors.

There is not much sign of a new approach coming from the present Council and so we have the spectacle of an unholy deal between the Mayor and Matt Brown and the government's weak acquiescence initiating another round of community action to defeat such a retrograde course of action. This will include the strong possibility of court action similar to the 1993 event. Thus we turn full circle!

This ongoing saga only serves to feed conflict and concern in the community – a situation that reflects poorly upon the Council

and the State Government. It is clear that the issue will not be resolved until the government steps in with an appropriate and responsible decision to reserve the whole Bushland area in a manner that precludes the possibility of roads or other damaging developments.

A change of attitude from our elected Councillors would be a welcome step regardless of the position taken by the government.

Unfortunately, the re-election of the Mayor and his political allies will only encourage them to remain wedded to their old ways and to use their success as justification for the government to grant approval of the project. So we await the outcome of the election and hope that the community will put a stop to this nonsense!

Let me know if you want to be on the action team fighting the road, and over the next few weeks please get stuck into questioning Council candidates about commitment to a better approach than the current disturbing example of environmental, traffic and social mismanagement. ■

(The author may be contacted on Ph: (02) 4422 1211 or Email: terrybar@sctelco.com.au)

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