



THE NEW BUSH TELEGRAPH

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Gulaga Campaign Continues

Virginia York

Campaigning and protest continues on the far south coast near Central Tilba where logging has been happening in the foothills on the north side of sacred mountain Gulaga (Mt Dromedary) in Compartment 3046 of the Bodalla State Forest.

After a fast announcement of the logging operation by Forests NSW, logging began in the beautiful spotted gum forests on the northern hills of Gulaga in early May and over the next 3 months the loggers were greeted each day by experienced protesters and local community members blocking the road early each morning. Police presence was high - with regular despatches of 4 - 6 cars laden with up to 20 police on "truck days" when the logged trees are removed. Visits from concerned Yuin traditional land-owners and elders, flying visits from politicians Lee Rhiannon and Senator Kerry Nettle, and community based activists.

After a tough cold and wet winter, the "vigil camp" packed up in late July, after a successful fundraising concert was held to help pay for arrest costs for protestors. There have been numerous arrests of both conservationists and local community members - including the much lauded "granny arrests" of local women, and there has also been much local media coverage in the Narooma News and ABC Bega. Now the campaign continues in a "next phase" - with more protest and education activities designed to keep drawing attention to what is happening still in the compartment. Drive on down and have a look one weekend at the damage - highly dispersible soils, canopy cover opened up, making ever more compromised the old growth forest ecosystems, and the usual devastation to habitat areas - all this continues to outrage and disturb locals and

And now it's Mollymook

Patrick Thompson

NEWS of yet another major development proposal, this time for Mollymook, has caused widespread community disquiet.

The latest proposal for a 79 unit, six story development in Ocean Street adjacent to

the beach was recently exhibited with a lack of community consultation.

The real story, however, concerns Member for the South Coast, Shelley Hancock. Having commissioned a survey that disclosed that 94.1% of the community were opposed to developments over four stories and the overwhelming majority

of the community 72.2% supported restricting height of buildings to two stories, Ms Hancock still made a submission in support of the DA claiming that it was acceptable to the community.

Her submission along with many others arrived in advance of the DA going on public exhibition. The developer is

entitled to lobby for his project and Shelley Hancock is the local member. She advertisers as the local member to: 'Please come in and see me - it will be a pleasure to help'. Apparently it doesn't matter what the community feels about this particular project or what her own survey found, Shelley Hancock supports this massive development.



PHOTO: RON DOUGHTON

conservationists alike.

Community meetings are held in the small hall at Central Tilba every Sunday at 5pm and

a weekly email update circulates to an ever growing list of supporters. Further information is available at the

website www.tilbalogging.com, where email contacts are also given. Recent activities and articles of interest are provided on

the website, as well as lobbying tools such as letter templates and politicians addresses. The protest continues ...

EDITORIAL

Howard's
Legacy

RECENTLY, I saw the film 'Amazing Grace' and it occurred to me that it is a reasonable proposition that had John Howard been around in the late 18th Century he would have been opposed to the abolition of the slave trade, if we are to judge by his performance in government.

John Howard is an accomplished politician, as his record attests. With skill he 'divides and rules' our community through his careful promotion of racial and social division. When the history of his government is written, this is what Howard will be remembered and for little else.

As the federal election approaches, one of John Howard's predictable skills is his ability to produce 'rabbits' from his hat. This time it started with the 'nuclear' one. Following one of his visits to President Bush, Howard returned with his nuclear vision for Australia or was it rather his hope to divide the ALP and splinter the climate debate. Somehow I doubt we will ever see Australia go nuclear. It was a loony idea and politically has so far turned into a bit of a fizzer.

Then came Howard's ten billion plan to 'save' the Murray-Darling Basin. It came in response to the drought and climate change. Any pretence that Howard was concerned about the environment is ludicrous. John Howard's concern for the environment has never stretched further than the green lawns of Kirribilli House. Most of the money is to compensate the farmers for past mistakes of over allocation.

Perhaps Howard's most Machiavellian plot to date has been his recent intervention into indigenous affairs with his sudden concern for the welfare of children. This from a man who can never bring himself to say 'sorry' for past wrongs and injustices to a stolen generation of children and who found it necessary to keep refugee children behind barbed wire for years.

And along came Dr Haneef. Fully acquainted with the facts that the public have thus far been denied, Howard's government has tried to orchestrate a national security crisis, unable to separate national security from electoral security. And so it goes on.

What follows now is hard to predict. Having choked off much revenue to the States, Howard will now try to buy our votes, as his treasurer Peter Costello has complained. Just may be John Howard is running out of luck and the public is waking up and growing tired of the Howard brand of politicking. We deserve better!

L E T T E R S

**Community Will
Not Be Muzzled**

Congratulations on the revamped and new look New Bush Tele. It is great to have a "voice" of reason back in the Shoalhaven, and by the sound of things it is surely needed.

I read with dismay about the Shoalhaven City Council's decision to allow more inappropriate development in the Shoalhaven; with the Huskisson story leading the way in the latest edition of NBT. However, even more daunting (but sadly predictable) is the attack on the community itself by the Council saying that they will discommuni- cate community groups seen to be involved in political activities.

This dramatic move by the Shoalhaven City Council is not only inappropriate, but I am left wondering who the Council will consult - local scout groups - or are they too political? How can you have a democratic community without political opinion? Through this action the Council is clearly saying that giving voice to community opinions is of no importance to them.

Surely consultation is the essence of good government, as well as being fundamental to sound leadership and democracy. Councils, like any other form of government, which do not consult their constituents, cannot retain the confidence of their community. A strong, healthy community ensures everyone has a voice, regardless of whether everyone agrees with it.

Councillors should know that the community will not be muzzled. Initiatives like the New Bush Telegraph prove how important a strong community voice is, and how important it is to recognise the full spectrum of political opinions ... whether Council likes it or not.

Brenda Duffy
St Georges Basin

Saddened Visitors

On a recent short visit to Huskisson we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves just taking in the natural

beauty of Jervis Bay. We strolled on the white sand beaches and wandered around the tracks in Booderee National Park, just taking in the scenery, watching the wildlife, the dolphins and the whales, and taking an interest in where you can fish and where you can't. The wild and rugged coastline around Cape St. George and the views from the ruined lighthouse are magnificent.

The coastal village atmosphere of Huskisson suited us just fine too, it's what we identify with and easily fit into. Then we picked up a copy of The Bush Telegraph and read with alarm and disappointment about the plans for future development of Huskisson. Why on earth would anybody in their right state of mind suggest using Port Stevens or Terrigal as models for future development here? The unique natural assets of Jervis Bay and surrounds must be the envy of many a coastal district, so why copy someone else's model for development? There must be better options for this pristine place.

We were even more disappointed to read of the impending sale of the RSL Club car park. We completely agree that the view is stunning and could rightly be described as Huskisson's soul. We are saddened that the Council would allow it to be ruined by property developers. This piece of real estate and its views should be preserved forever!

Phillip & Monica Clarke,
Inverell, NSW

Afghanistan War

Afghanistan should never have been invaded in 2001. It was vengeful overkill by the United States and its allies to attack a nation because of 9/11. If they wanted to take out known Al Qaeda sites they could have done so without killing tens of thousands of innocent Afghani's. It isn't our job to keep the Taliban from returning to power. That's the job of the Afghan people.

The current puppet government in Kabul under Hamid Karzai has little or no credibility outside of the capital. His government would

have fallen but for the protection it receives from the US led invaders. Like the Green Zone in Iraq, Kabul is a little Yankee protectorate - a canker that has to be removed if progress is to be made.

Adam Bonner,
Meroo Meadow

Mollymook worries

I'm a resident of Mollymook Beach, a quiet beachside village suburb of Ulladulla that most people on the South Coast know and I have a serious problem.

Last week locals received notice of a development application that Shoalhaven City Council would allegedly like to pass. The application is for a six storey mega building to be built near the beach at the end of our street and that doesn't include the carpark underneath. The building will contain 79 home units, on eight blocks of land, most with homes. My maths tells me that this is nearly a 10 fold increase in population. One doesn't have to be Einstein to realize that the people who will own the units and their friends and visitors will have to drive down our quiet street to reach the Princes Highway, changing it forever. Of course, car parking will become chronically overcrowded; spilling into surrounding local streets. Increasing numbers of weekend drunks returning from local clubs will add to an already serious rowdiness problem at night.

Now, this potential for social and urban problems raises a few questions.

For example, how is it possible that the two storey building code for this area can be lightly brushed aside? How is it possible that 'developers' can propose huge urban buildings housing hundreds of people in a tiny space and have their plans accepted? Why is our council so keen to put a city building in the middle of a beach side village? Of the \$25 million construction cost quoted, who apart from the developers, benefits? Are there any benefits to Council or Councillors? If so, how much and why? Also, if monies have been accepted, how can councillors ethically explain such



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benefits? Have councillors or staff been 'persuaded' in any way to vary height restrictions or urban density considerations? When my objections arrive in Council do I have any guarantee that they will be fairly considered? What exactly are those guarantees and who guarantees them?

We've been reading and hearing about many such projects of late in the Shoalhaven. I don't oppose sensible development that's in keeping with the area but creating a totally inappropriate mega building to line the pockets of a select few, while destroying local amenity, has my total opposition.

I'm sure many Mollymookers feel the same way but maybe we don't count...

Ron Doughton
Mollymook



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TSO Position Under Threat

Rebecca Rudd

SHOALHAVEN City Council has one of the highest numbers of Threatened Species and Endangered Ecological Communities of any local government Council's Threatened Species Officer area. Council has a responsibility under the EP&A Act 1979 to consider whether there is likely to be a significant impact on threatened species, populations or ecological communities or their habitats

when assessing Development Applications. If Council fails to properly consider this issue, any development consent is open to legal challenge by a third party and a lengthy and expensive court case can ensue.

Currently Council relies on the position of Threatened Species Officer to provide this expert advice. However, Council has decided to make this position redundant with a review in four months. Council still has a legal requirement to consider

threatened species and is now looking at using consultants to fill this role.

Indicative cost estimates suggest that outsourcing the threatened species assessment role will be more costly than employing a staff member and it is unlikely that there will be any decrease in the time taken for assessment review using environmental consultants.

Council has a responsibility to the ratepayers to manage effectively. Under Councils

charter the first point is: "to provide directly or on behalf of other levels of government, after consultation, adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community and to ensure that those services and facilities are managed efficiently and effectively".

I do not believe that sacking the Threatened Species Officer is working in anyone's best interest. Please write to the General Manager expressing your view on this issue.

Lessons In RTA/community Clash

Chris Noble

ON July 23rd 2007 the RTA began cutting down the trees that graced the entry to the Kangaroo Valley township. There is no doubt that the majority of residents were opposed to this action although many amongst them expressed willingness to negotiate a reasonable outcome which would aim at increasing safety whilst maintaining the visual beauty of this particular section of a scenic drive. Trish McClure, head of Safety NSW RTA, received copious letters opposing the proposal to take down 97 trees and eventually agreed to hold an information evening and a public meeting. It is hard to believe that neither of these events made the slightest bit of difference to the final outcome. Suggestions were sought by the RTA but, as far as I know, not a single one was acted upon. The public could not be blamed for thinking it was a complete waste of their time. Sadly public participation in any future consultative approach is likely to be boycotted as a result.

The RTA was required to inspect the area after a fatal

crash occurred in 2002 and by law a hazard identification and risk analysis were required. The outcome was not only to remove the "offending" tree but 96 others, to allow for an "area of forgiveness". This refers to the area that allows a driver to correct a vehicle if they lose concentration for a few seconds and is able to correct the wheel before crashing into a tree. Had the under-aged boys not been drinking and driving well above the speed & alcohol limits this scenario may not have come about. Drink driving will always be the greater danger. And whilst the alcohol industry has so much power to influence our youth and target underage drinkers with drinks that deliberately mask the alcohol taste we are fighting a formidable foe. The hotel lobby has been compared to the National Gun Lobby of USA for its power & influence in Government. If the RTA is doing its job in ensuring safer roads let us demand the same vigilance from the State Government in standing up to that industry. We cannot talk about road safety without including the subject of youth, alcohol, immoral advertising and lobbying.



PHOTO: DANA JAFFRAY

Clearly communication skills need to be taught to the RTA management: fundamental conflict resolution skills, negotiation skills and demonstration of genuine consultation.

I think it is possible that we can learn from this and I don't propose that the RTA act on public opinion alone. If that were the case, we'd see the felling of most of the trees that line the Appin Way as apparently the RTA are being constantly requested to cut down trees along that beautiful stretch of road. I'd like to see the RTA act with more integrity. For example they reported to the South Coast Register that the community broadly supported

their proposal to fell 97 trees when the public meeting clearly demonstrated overwhelming opposition as did the 607 people who signed the petition. At the same public meeting, the RTA spokesperson promised that "no final decision" had been made, nor would be made for another 6 months and yet it appears that the relevant contractors had already been booked.

This is not the way to win respect and trust.

The impetus for the tree felling was always stated by the RTA as a safety issue. This poses the need to more fully protect our heritage Hampden Bridge from being destroyed by heavy trucks. The serious consequences of not attending to this type of threat have been seen in the tragic loss of life in the bridge collapse in America recently. But where are the efforts to apply weighing devices near the bridge or even advertising the fact that RTA officials will be randomly booking those drivers whose trucks are more than 4.2 tonnes?

There will always be those who have a different point of view about these issues. I often think of Blake's words: To some a tree is of such beauty it brings

tears of joy, whilst to others it is just a green thing that stands in the way. As a community we have to develop the capacity to acknowledge that others see it differently and avoid the wedges that occur when intolerance overtakes a reasoned response. I am saddened that the trees have been felled but like many was prepared to reluctantly accept that some may have to come down. I'm disappointed that it was all carried out with unnecessary haste and without authentic consultation and I'm disappointed to read letters to the editor that are personally attacking those who stood up to defend what they thought was right.

However, we also witnessed Joanna Gash (Lib MP), Lee Rhiannon (Greens MP), Councillors Bates and Anderson standing united and in support of the community. We saw children participating and witnessing a peaceful protest. Without such will and courage, change would rarely take place.

It is time to move on. We need to ensure that scenic drives are protected. If we have to change legislation to do it then we must. If we have to protest to be heard, we will. ■

The Shoalhaven's millionaire vandals

If the Shoalhaven was turned into a Monopoly board, Collingwood Beach at Vincentia would be a good candidate for the blue-blooded positions of Mayfair or Park Lane.

David Duffy

PROPERTIES along this foreshore strip of Jervis Bay regularly fetch \$1 million and have always been prized since first being subdivided and sold for £300 each in the late 1950s.

According to Mayor Greg Watson, the land in question was a series of rolling sand dunes before much of the fore-dune was bulldozed during the subdivision. This removal of vegetation directly impacted on the properties subsequently built along Collingwood beach.

"Sand blown under roof tiles would settle in the ceilings of these houses, and caused many to cave in," he said. This, combined with flooding in the early 1970s, which swept away much of Collingwood beach, led to work to stabilise and revegetate the dune to protect houses and the beach.

Fast forward 30 years, and it appears some of the residents of Collingwood Beach want to undo the work that was done to protect their homes and the beach.

Strolling along the path which separates the yards of these houses from the beach, there is ample evidence of a foreshore littered with poisoned, dying, cut

or severely trimmed vegetation - including the remains of many mature Banksias.

While Cllr Watson did not want to be drawn on who has been destroying vegetation on this Council-owned land, he did say that Council take a very dim view of vegetation clearing.

"I am aware that a number of the properties are only casually occupied," he said, "but I would be surprised if the owners weren't aware of the situation. Council has recently had a couple of successful prosecutions, with one person fined \$40,000 for land clearing and forced to replant public and private land," he said.

One member of the local Bushcare group and Vincentia resident wasn't as reluctant to point the finger. However, he did ask that his name not be used due to concerns for his safety.

"Some property owners see the dune as blocking their million dollar views of Jervis Bay", he said, "you can see in some places where they've cut a corridor for their view."

"Most of the houses where this happens are weekenders for people from Sydney. And a couple of times I've been out looking at the damage and the owners come out shaking their



PHOTO: DAVID DUFFY

heads as well, they're crafty like that," he said.

This stretch of foreshore has not been without its share of controversies. Opinions were divided in the 1990s when Council decided to build a bike path through what many owners considered to be extensions of their back yards.

According to the Vincentia resident, Council's current payment of \$500 is inadequate to encourage people to notify council about vandalism, saying it wouldn't cover the cost of a couple of broken windows from vexatious neighbours.

"Council should at least start by increasing the reward to \$20,000 which might make people stop and think about it for a while," he said, "who knows, they might not even have to pay it."

Councils in other parts of the state are known to be more

proactive when dealing with foreshore vegetation clearance, including some such as Sydney's Waverly council which install large signs in place of the destroyed vegetation.

"There are some councils up north that put shipping containers in places where vegetation has been poisoned or removed," he said, "but I don't think that would work in this case."

"I think they should use tape with writing on it to let people know what they've done, embarrass them a bit. As it is, Council's rangers show up, take a couple of photos and then you don't hear any more because they've got no witnesses."

"If they put a bit more thought into it or talked to a few more people or even appointed a few honorary rangers - they might have a chance," he said.

Cllr Rebecca Rudd also assists the local Bushcare group, and is keen to support a Summer Ranger program to combat vandals.

"A Summer Ranger program would see rangers interacting with the users of the reserve who could be approached and have matters discussed. That would be a better initiative than big ugly signs," she said. "I would rather see the money spent in positive ways - public information and the education about the preservation of foreshore."

Cllr Rudd also thinks interpretive signs along

Collingwood beach could be a positive way to manage vandalism.

"These signs could be sponsored by the local community and businesses," she said. "Otherwise, what is Council meant to do? Unless people are prepared to state what they saw, the chain of evidence breaks down."

Cllr Rudd also expressed her concern that Council's current Foreshore Reserves Policy has no funding specifically dedicated to protection against vandalism.

"Unfortunately, what can be seen along the Collingwood beach foreshore at Vincentia is only the tip of the iceberg," she said, "for example, extensive damage has been done on the southern side of Plantation Point where vegetation has just been pushed towards the beach."

With the Shoalhaven now entrenched on the southern fringe of Sydney's property market, and ocean views highly prized, increasing the development pressures are only likely to further threaten to public foreshore land.

Until there are major improvements in cooperation between Council and the community, such as the increase in rewards and the establishment of a Summer Ranger program, the millionaire vandals will continue to act with impunity. With every tree they poison or cut down the value of the properties in these monopoly portfolios increases -

Howard's New Tampa - Aboriginal Children Overboard

Jennifer Martiniello

HOWARD'S new Tampa children overboard are our Aboriginal children. The Little Children are Sacred report does not advocate physically and psychologically invasive examinations of Aboriginal children, which could only be carried out anally and vaginally. It does not recommend scrapping the permit system to enter Aboriginal lands, nor does it recommend taking over Aboriginal 'towns' by enforced leases. These latter two points in the Howard scheme hide the true reason for the Federal Government's use of the latest report for blatant political opportunism.

It has been an openly stated agenda that Howard wants to move Aboriginal people off their lands, and has made recent attempts to buy off Aboriginal people by offering them millions for agreeing to lease their lands to the Federal Government, e.g. Tiwi Islands and Tangentyere in Alice Springs. There was also the statement by the Federal Government that it could not continue (!) to provide essential services to remote communities, which raised an uproar of responses in the press. The focus on the sexual abuse of children is guaranteed to evoke the most emotive responses, and therefore command attention, just like the manipulation of the Tampa situation. But while the attention of the media and the public is being emotionally coerced, what is being sneaked in under the covers?

Two issues specifically - mining companies have applied for more exploration permits in the Northern Territory, the Jabiluka uranium mining operations at Kakadu have already hit the media because of the mining company's applications to the Government to significantly expand its operations, including establishing new mines at Koongarra, and another critical issue - nuclear waste. The Howard Government has already mooted that nuclear waste should be dumped in the Northern Territory, on Aboriginal lands. Aboriginal traditional owners are absolutely opposed to this. We have a long history of deaths and illness from radiation, from the atomic tests at Maralinga in the 1950s to the current high incidences of carcinomas in the community at Kakadu near the Jabiluka site. The main obstacle to the Federal Government's desired expansion of mining operations in the Northern Territory and nuclear waste dumping is, of course, the Aboriginal people who have occupancy of, and rights under the common law to, their traditional lands.

Following the stages of the

Howard Government's usual modus operandi (defund, blame, eliminate), defunding of critical programs for remote Aboriginal community projects began in July 2004, with coerced changes to funding contracts, and monies for critically needed youth and health programs in remote areas being the first dollars to go. Take Mutitjulu for example, which was notoriously profiled by the ABC's Lateline program. I say notorious because one of Federal Minister Mal Brough's personal staffers was the so-called ex-youth worker interviewed on that program, and the content of that interview was laden with myths and mistruths. The staffer in question failed to appear when summoned before a Senate inquiry to explain and the Minister's office is yet to issue a statement. When the community lodged a formal protest to Government, it was raided and their computers seized. But the program did show the effects of the Howard Government defunding of essential programs on that community, in particular the youth centre and health centre. The people at Mutitjulu also just happen to be the traditional owners of Uluru, one of this country's most lucrative tourist attractions. The Howard Government would not like us to ask who benefits by the people of Mutitjulu being forced off their community. Under the amendments to Native Title made by the Howard Government, once Aboriginal people have left their traditional lands, forcibly or otherwise, their rights under the common law that every other Australian enjoys over their land are significantly impaired.

Progressive defunding of Aboriginal art centres has also begun, with a range of community art centres not having their funding renewed by DCITA in July 2005 and 2006 in the Northern Territory, from communities in Arnhemland to mid and southern Territory communities. The art production facilitated by those Aboriginal art centres are the only means through which members of those communities can actually earn a living, as opposed to being on welfare. But then, dependent people are easier to control by means of that dependency. The Howard Government's failed Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) have also been the catalyst for further blame shifting and progressive defunding, take Wadeye for example.

Our Aboriginal communities are being squeezed further into dysfunction and disenfranchisement by carefully targeted political engineering, the systemic and ruthless roll-out of a planned agenda. It is no accident that Howard's scheme to address what he calls the urgency of the Little Children are Sacred report's

• • • • •
The most critical question for all Australians to ask themselves is... What if it were done to us?

97 recommendations was trotted out so very quickly, and addresses so very few of those recommendations. It is sheer political opportunism to advance an already in motion agenda, and to score points in an election year. After all, The Little Children are Sacred report is not the first of such reports, nor are its findings and recommendations new. The Federal Government has had the 1989, 1991, 1993, 1997 and 2002 reports gathering dust and deliberate inaction on its shelves. Perhaps Mr Howard has been saving them up for a rainy election year?

And of course Mr Howard's scheme targets only Aboriginal communities, despite the fact that the findings specifically state that non-Aboriginal men, that is, white men, are a significant proportion of the offenders, who are black-marketeering in petrol and alcohol to gain access to Aboriginal children. What measures is the Howard Government going to take about non-Aboriginal sex offenders, pornographers, substance traffickers and the like? Nothing according to the measures announced, but then, they're not Aboriginal and they don't live on the Aboriginal communities where their victims live.

So who are the real victims here, the silenced victims of John Howard's scheme? Aboriginal children, of course, who will be subject to physically and psychologically invasive medical examinations, irrespective of their home and family circumstances, and who will deal with the mental and emotional fall-out from that? Aboriginal men, too, who become the silenced scapegoats, painted by default by John Howard as all being drunken, child-raping monsters. Perhaps the fact that almost every picture shown of Aboriginal men in the media these days shows them drunk, with a slab, cask or bottle under their arms leads Mr Howard to expect that one to pass unchallenged, irrespective of the fact that statistics show that only 15% of Aboriginal people drink alcohol, socially or otherwise, compared to around 87% of non-Aboriginal Australians. The greater majority of Aboriginal men are good, decent people. Perhaps the media would like to rethink its portrayals of Aboriginal men? How about some photos of the other alcoholics, you know, the white

ones. There's more of them.

And what of our communities? The Howard Government also hasn't mentioned that the majority of Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory are already dry communities, decided and enforced by those communities. But then that would spoil the picture Mr Howard wants to paint of our Aboriginal communities. Other large communities, such as Daly River, have controlled the situation by only having alcohol available from the community's club and enforce a strict four can limit. Also forgotten in the current politically opportunistic furore is the fact that Aboriginal communities around Tennant Creek and Katherine have been lobbying Governments and town councils for decades to restrict the sale of alcohol on Thursdays, when Aboriginal community people come to town for supplies. So far their pleas have been rejected. Nothing in Mr Howard's plan to facilitate that, either. Or about the control of alcohol when those people, once forced off the communities into the towns, bring their problems with them, child abuse or alcoholism and all the rest. Of course that would make access to Aboriginal children a lot easier for white offenders, they won't have to go so far to find a victim.

One last word on focus of attention. In the famous Redfern Address, the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating asked perhaps the most important question for all Australians to consider. He said 'We failed to ask the most basic of questions. We failed to ask - What if this were done to us?' What if this were done to us - to Mr and Mrs Average Australian, to our schools, youth centres, health centres, access to medical care, communities, homes, children, grandchildren?

After all, current national health reports from a wide range of health organisations name sexual abuse of non-Indigenous Australian children as a crisis area in need of urgent attention. And the numbers of victims are higher. National reports into mainstream domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse also call for urgent action, again the issues are at crisis level, and the numbers of victims and abusers are far higher than in the Little Children are Sacred report. None of the recommendations in all of those hundreds of national health reports recommend compulsory sexual health tests for every Australian child under sixteen. Not one of them recommends that a viable solution is closing down youth and health programs, in fact they all advocate that more are needed. None recommend that the victims' or the offenders' communities and homes should be surrendered to

the Federal Government and put under compulsory lease agreements, and none advocate processes which would lead to either the victims or the abusers losing their rights under common law to their property as measure to control or remedy the occurrence of abuse. Would the Howard Government even dare to contemplate such as that? I think not. It would be un-Australian, and the Government would expect immediate legal repercussions on the grounds of impairment of human rights, extinguishment of rights under common law, discrimination, and a raft of other constitutional issues. Besides, Mr and Mrs Average Australian don't, for the most part, live on top of uranium and mineral deposits or future nuclear waste dumps.

But seriously, the most critical question for all Australians to ask themselves in the lead up to this year's Federal Election is just that - What if it were done to us? With full acknowledgment of what has already been done to workers, trade unions, student unions, public primary, secondary and tertiary education, elderly care, palliative care, medicare, crisis health care, nurses, teachers, multicultural affairs, migrant groups, women, child care, small businesses and artists, among the many, through the exercise of policies of social engineering and fear, your answer at the polling booth may just determine whether it will be done to you, or continue to be done to you. As reported in the Sydney Morning Herald 25th June, the Howard Government last week used the military to seize control of 60 Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, which are now under military occupation. This is not Israel and Palestine. The Northern Territory is not Gaza or the West Bank. This is Australia - but is it the Australia you thought you lived in? Walk in our shoes, Aboriginal Australia's, and ask yourselves, what would it be like to have this done to us? And then, walk with us.

Jennifer Martiniello is an award winning poet, writer, visual artist and academic of Arrernte, Chinese and Anglo-Celtic descent. Jennifer was awarded the Canberra Critics Circle Award 2000 for Literature, and was an ACT Creative Arts Fellow for 2003. She has published five books and her poetry, prose and essays have been published nationally and internationally. She is a former Deputy Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, a member of the Advisory Committee of Aboriginal Studies press, ALATSI, and currently sits on the Advisory Board of the Australian Centre for Indigenous History at the ANU. She is the Director of Kemarre Arts, and teaches Community Development and Indigenous Issues at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

And in the Shoalhaven? TAGGED WITH THE SAME BLOODY BULLSHIT

Dennis Argall

I had asked a Koori friend how he felt about the local member of parliament calling for Federal intervention at Wreck Bay after the manner of its blundering into the Northern Territory.

After a long and unhappy paragraph, speaking of the realities of the world and its troubles for families of all kinds everywhere, he sighed and said it all in one mouthful: "Tagged with the same bloody bullshit."

On 27 July the ABC's Stateline program had covered the call by the Member for Gilmore, Joanna Gash MP, for Federal intervention at Wreck Bay. Why did she not call the police, the reporter asked:

JOANNA GASH: Over the years I have done that, to the Federal police, but of course you've got to have the victim come and back you up, and that's the heartbreaking part of this saga, because they have not been able to do so simply because of fear and intimidation. One person's already had their house ramshackled; they've had graffiti all over them, simply because they know of their association with me.

MELISSA POLIMENI: The Wreck Bay locals we spoke to say that culture of fear and intimidation simply doesn't exist. They say

there's no evidence of physical or sexual abuse in their community, and to suggest otherwise is fuelling racism.

LEON BROWN, WRECK BAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL: I don't believe that it is an ongoing problem within our community. We have had moments in time where people have done the wrong thing to other people in the community, but the community has taken necessary precautions, legal actions against individuals.

JULIE MOORE, WRECK BAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL: We just can't see where the same - where they would transfer this intervention across to Jervis Bay territory and on what basis they could do that.

JOANNA GASH: If there are areas of the intervention plan that they've used in the Northern Territory that would be suitable for Wreck Bay, then yes, I would encourage intervention in that degree.

The Labor candidate for Gilmore Neil Reilly writes to me:

I have spoken with a number of people, among them Ginger O'Brien from the Noah's Ark Foundation, who help the community with early childhood support.

She advises there is no threat. I feel that the community has been put under unfair pressure and

media exposure, Gash will not come forward with evidence on these allegations that are in a legal sense "Reportable". She must, under law, with or without witnesses, report her accusations to police and DOCS.

I asked my local Koori friend what will be the outcome of the intervention in the Northern Territory.

"It is a great opportunity. We must use it as a great opportunity."

How so? I asked.

"Well we've had forty years, that's all. Not long, really. Forty years from when we got the right to vote and got included in the laws and counted in the population. Forty years of efforts for reconciliation. That's all ended now. This government has ended all that. It's over."

"But now we've got something to work against, to shape what we do. We blackfellas have to work together now, to find unity and strength."

Wreck Bay is the Aboriginal community within the Federal Jervis Bay Territory. People there actually vote not in the electorate of Gilmore in New South Wales but in the ACT's electorate of Fraser, held by Labor's Bob McMullan.

In the 1980s, locals, including some those who set up this newspaper, campaigned successfully

against the Navy headquartering itself in Jervis Bay. The Federal Government, defeated on that matter, established a National Park and in 1986 the parliament passed the Aboriginal Land Grant (Jervis Bay Territory) Act, granting some land in the Federal Territory to the local Aboriginal community at Wreck Bay.

In 1986 there was community dispute over the negotiations and the adequacy of the grant. There are always such things. People say "Oh, I'm staying out of Koori politics... but then the same people proceed to tell me terrible tales about their own local community politics or Greens politics...etc."

We struggle to get a quorum for a community forum in my Shoalhaven village of Tomerong. Wreck Bay got saddled with legislation that vested everything in a Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council and made every single person over 18 in the community a member of the Council. What clever whitefella law...

In 1986 the local community numbered about 70 or 80 people but in 2007 there are about 280 council members, not all living at Wreck Bay, over the age of 18.

In 1995, the then Labor

Federal Government handed back the National Park and Botanic Gardens to the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community. The Community and the Australian Government, through the Director of National Parks, now jointly manage the Park and the Botanic Gardens.

This year, a month before before Joanna Gash's proposal for military and police intervention at Wreck Bay, consultants appointed by the Federal Government reported on the operation of the 1986 Act and the Wreck Bay Council. Their report tells, in over 60 pages, a very difficult story, including the difficulties of getting understanding across the community about issues on which they must all decide, under the terms of the Act... leading to great difficulties with decision-making.

20km up the road, in our largely white community, tell anyone anything about an issue and it will be upside down and twisted sideways in 24 hours. Nothin' special about blackfellas in that business.

Everywhere the issues of recognition, community identity and empowerment. Maybe there is a great opportunity in this coming adversity... but how much damage before any gains? ■

Letter to John Howard

Bindi Isis

I HAVE worked as a teacher in two remote communities over the last six years. In my short time I saw the guidelines for government funding change radically, this became demoralising. As if teaching, managing and parenting wasn't hard enough in these resource starved communities without having to understand, then conform to new funding requirements as pronounced by city office workers thousands of kilometres away.

The systematic removal of all the structures of indigenous representation/governmental interface from these communities left nothing in their place. I fear the current federal intervention into NT communities may follow this same logic, punishing everyone for the irresponsible behaviour of a few.

I know that Aboriginal people this continent over are grieving, I feel certain this plague of child and substance abuse stems from a profound sadness. The sadness of having lost so much culture and language, the sadness from having been misunderstood for so long, the sadness for the continual loss of relatives and the sadness of not



being able to gain a foothold in the modern culture without leaving your community behind. To aid in the relief of this suffering our government must send grief counsellors, if those personnel currently being sent to our communities are not grief counsellors, well let them be trained. We all must be open to the full process of grieving, we can't bury hurt, pain and old memories any longer. The nation needs to place memorials where massacres took place. We must hear an empathic and resounding apology from our leaders before we move on.

The measures outlined in national and local media amount to another era of dysfunctional misguided paternalism. If you want to improve the health of the child, then provide one rounded meal per indigenous child per day, not a one off medical examination. Of course then you would have to fund expanded school/community kitchens, school/community eatery areas (so children don't share their dinner with the camp dogs) school chefs and freight allowances so that fresh nutritious food is available to bush kids.

If you want to protect children in communities then build, staff and resource safe houses where children know they can go when the adults in the household lose their temper or arrive home drunk. Make these houses open 24/7 staffed by outsiders and local people. Make regular counselling services available from these safe houses. Acknowledge and celebrate the parents and guardians already providing safehouses to neglected and abused children.

If you want to prevent child sexual abuse then furnish each community with a media centre. Encourage each community to engage in weekly intercommunity discourse about the problem of

child abuse.

Provide communities with the technology and the training and ongoing technical expertise to document progress of initiatives discussed, share the solutions that are successful with other communities, and rebuild songlines.

If you want to be remembered for turning the key on economic development in remote regions then set about giving indigenous people the experience and the training to set up their own small businesses. Fund transport for people to get trained and inspired and sell their product.

Don't meddle with the permit system. Removal of this system opens fragile Aboriginal communities to any and all opportunists. Retaining the permit system allows Aboriginal people control over the services, goods and spiritual influences available to their people.

To make a lasting difference, government must focus on the strong sober human centres of our remote Indigenous communities to identify then build upon the advantages of these locations and of the remote lifestyles offered there. I look forward to hearing the Federal Government outline a more considered policy response to the NT situation, which empowers the communities there and respects their culture and land rights, and radically boosts spending on housing,

education, health services and job creation over the next 10 years.

Bindi Isis is well known in the Shoalhaven for community arts endeavours. She moved from Tomerong to the Northern Territory for graduate study and teaching in remote Aboriginal communities. Bindi has spent three years in floodplain country near Wadeye and three years in the stone country of southeast Arnhem Land. She currently lives in Darwin with her husband and two sons.

NEW BUSH TELEGRAPH

has a new web site at www.newbushtelegraph.net

You can download a copy of

each issue there.

This month we begin

also to provide a 'web resources page' with links to supporting information.

In this month's resource page, you can find links to the actual legislation by which the government is intervening in the Northern Territory — and more.

You are welcome to contribute by recommending other links.



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TOMERONG VILLAGE MARKET

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Tomerong Village Market is 'a happening' on the 3rd Saturday of each month with a focus on handmade and home grown products at Tomerong School of Arts.

Lots of interesting stalls with organic fresh food from Shoalhaven Food Co-Op, delicious homemade dips, fresh sour dough bread, cakes, crystals, jewellery, toys, clothes, fresh fruit & veg, preserves, second-hand books, CDs, coffee, local honey, plants, fruit trees and worms! Anyone interested in starting a worm farm can buy a kit from the market.

Tomerong market always a good way to spend the morning and catch up with friends and get a few bargains. Please bring your own bags to avoid the use of plastic ones.

Across the road, Tomerong Union Church will once again be fundraising with lovely native plants and Tomerong honey for sale. If you are a musician and would like to busk, please come along. For the kids there is face painting and hair braiding.

The market is a fundraising initiative to help sustain Tomerong Hall. Please contact Kate on 4443 9480 if you would like a stall at only \$12 (outside) inside (\$15).

People wishing to book the Hall should contact Chris ph: 4443 4923.

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Festival of Seditious

Huskisson Community Centre:
September 29th

IF ever you feel reluctant to go against the tide and express dissent, just remember the most inspirational people in history did just that.

The 2nd Festival of Seditious organised by the Shoalhaven Greens takes place on Saturday September 29th and once again gives people the opportunity to not only express an opposing viewpoint to those held by our present government, but also to have some fun and get informed, all at the same time.

Festivities start at 10am with seditious art, poetry, music, speakers and films at Huskisson Community Centre, next to the Police Station.

At this stage speakers booked for the day include:

■ Dr. Michael McKinley, Senior Lecturer in International Studies ANU - on the subject of Anti Terrorism as an Industry

■ Kerry Nettle, Greens Senator - terrorism laws used in relation to Dr. Haneef

■ Susan Ryan, A.O., Chair of the Human Rights Act for Australia project - speaking on A Bill of Rights

■ Chris Warren, President Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - on Freedom of Speech
Nothing protects democracy more than free speech, and poetry will be spread throughout the day organised by Tomerong poet Andrew 'Harv' Harvey.

Artists wanting to contribute to the art exhibition or help in hanging artworks should contact Suzi Krawczyk on 4446 0569.

There will be some great live music during the day which will also have seditious messages

- so listen closely! Performers include Jen Saunders & Nick, Honest John, Alan Blackshaw, Andy Gordon, the Wand'ring Menstruals choir and many more.

Films will start after 4pm at a cost of \$10 and will include:

David Bradbury's latest film A Hard Rain, which explores the real issues and grim truth of nuclear power as an alternative to fossil fuels.

Other films will include The Revolution Will Not Be Televised, Loose Change, Bad Seed, 9/11 Mysteries.

Over the past 11 years under this Howard-led government we have witnessed a serious erosion of personal freedom and rights. We have witnessed a so called 'War against Terror' used to keep Australians fearful and hateful. And we are now witness to a growing disgust with a Government that is clearly abusing its power.

Such groups as "Get Up" which capture and direct the voice of dissent are voices which are growing louder by the day. It is such active involvement with the politics of the day that will fight to protect a democracy we can respect. To disassociate ourselves from politics is naïve. It is we who are tarnished by the effects of inhumane, unjust decisions our government makes in our name.

To check festival details closer to the date go to the Shoalhaven Greens website on www.shoalhaven.nsw.greens.org.au

For further information on the Shoalhaven Greens contact Chris Nobel 4465 1285

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ENVIROSCENE

Our Oceans – A Diminishing Resource

Bernie Clarke, Sussex Inlet

A RECENT report of the disappearance of a 'forest' of seaweed, from Palm Beach south beyond Botany Bay is cause for concern. The seaweed, PHYLLOSPORA comosa, bubble weed is found growing on rocks below high water. It is the latest on a long list of marine flora slowly disappearing from coastal rocks and the intertidal zone up and down the NSW and Victorian coast. Growing up to three metres tall, the seaweed provides food and shelter for dozens of marine species.

Early this year I accompanied two marine scientists on a fact finding tour of a number of ocean rock platforms from Shellharbour to Batemans Bay. We carried our spot checks of marine animals and algae that inhabit intertidal rock platforms to compare the data with a similar study carried out in 1985. We were concerned by the lack of numbers and poor specie diversity during our visit

to corresponding locations on the 1985 survey which raised many questions.

Common species familiar to fishermen and picnickers included: periwinkle, black elephant snails, oval shape chiton, helmet shaped limpet, turban shell, barnacles and spitting cunjevoi. Our attention was drawn to the scarcity of crabs and what has happened to all the cabbage that adorned the wet rock zone we wondered. The trip left us with many questions to pursue.

Next time you visit an ocean rock platform take note of the overall number of animals and species and recollect if you have noticed a decline from your visit about the same time the previous year.

Alarm bells rang recently when news of the commercially important abalone shellfish developed a disease that has threatened the industry. Known also as 'ear' shell this highly prized seafood is facing strict quotas due to the spread of what

is thought to be a herpes virus. It is the disease that caused the death of tens thousands of pilchards stretching from Bass Strait, NSW coast and across the Tasman to New Zealand's west coast during 1995.

There has been an alarming decline in pelagic fish numbers in recent years. Sea garfish, a much sought after bait fish found surfacing in schools off the NSW coast have almost disappeared. Tailor, another pelagic popular with anglers, often found in large schools in coastal waters, have been in decline for a number of years and not from overfishing.

There is irrefutable evidence escalating domestic and industrial waste discharge and the discharge of ship's ballast water is causing increasing mortality to populations of fish worldwide. Although Australia's contribution is small by comparison to more populated nations, it is sufficient to cause concern over its impact on local fisheries including habitat. ■

SHOALHAVEN BUG



THE Shoalhaven Bicycle User Group (BUG) was formed in September 1997 as a lobby group at the local Government level for better cycling conditions and infrastructure, and as a non competitive social and recreational cycling group. The BUG is recognised as being representative of cyclists within the Shoalhaven, and we are often asked for input from the Council on cycling issues. We are an affiliate of Bicycle NSW which lobbies at a state level, and organises large cycling events such as the annual RTA big Ride.

Any one who is a member of Bicycle NSW and resides in the Shoalhaven is automatically a member of the Shoalhaven BUG and can vote at meetings, run for the committee, and lead rides. However we do not restrict participation in our rides to members. In fact any one who turns up can participate as long as they have a helmet, a roadworthy bicycle, and are willing to abide by the road

rules. The only restriction we impose is that children under 14 must be accompanied by a responsible adult. There is no membership fee, and the only fund raising we do to cover expenses is to ask for a gold coin donation during our regular Sunday ride.

It is our aim to get as many people on bicycles as possible, and to encourage people to make cycling a part of their way of life. We have official rides, ie rides that are advertised on the Bicycle NSW rides calendar, on Mondays, Thursdays, Saturday morning and Sundays. These rides vary in intensity and there are easy rides aimed at getting the not so fit back into cycling every Thursday and the first Sunday of every month. The other rides vary from moderate to hard. It is very satisfying to watch some one who tentatively turns up to have a go at our easy rides increase their fitness over time, and go on to easily participate in our harder rides. The environment of these rides varies from road rides to bush rides or a combination of both. Our rides are very social and always include a coffee stop either during or after the ride.

For details of rides you can check the Bicycle NSW website. Google pushon, click on the rides calendar link, and choose Shoalhaven BUG from the drop down box. Alternatively contact Jim on 44232943, 0438232943, laja.florence@bigpond.com, or Judi on 44215214, 0412880365, judipuru@hotmail.com ■



Are You Curious About the Greens candidate for Gilmore, Ben van der Wijngaart?

What his views are on the things that are important to you?

Why not invite him over, with some friends and neighbours for a happy hour/picnic/barbecue/lunch or whatever suits you. **You may just like what Ben has to say.** He'll be interested in what you've got to say. **Why not call him on 42322319, or email on Ben@kiama.nsw.greens.org.au.**

Ben served 33 years in the RAAF, where he held a number of senior leadership and command appointment, in Australia and overseas. He is a Fellow in Defence and Strategic Studies and has worked 9 years as a business consultant.

"As a society we face a number of unprecedented challenges. I believe that only the Greens have the right policies that show the necessary leadership, imagination, courage and compassion to deal with these challenges."

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THE LAST WORD

Where did the voice of sanity go?

Dennis Argall

In the beginning, in 1996, there was an election of a conservative Prime Minister, John Howard. Then came an unfortunate and terrible person called Martin Bryant, who in April that year massacred people at Port Arthur in Tasmania, killing 35 and wounding 37. The Prime Minister achieved an extraordinary thing, intervening with a sweeping new policy, implemented and financed by a tax levy, to buy back most of the nation's guns. Great work.

Then came a crisis in East Timor in 1999 and, reversing decades of policy, the same government intervened militarily in East Timor — and succeeded, as a great tribute to Australian Defence Force capabilities, doctrine and decency rather than as a result of grand policy of the government of the day.

A pattern emerging: a shift from grand words ("No child will live in poverty...") to incisive action.

On 11 September 2001, passengers fighting terrorists on a passenger plane over Maryland crashed the plane which was very likely planning to crash into the White House... across the road from which John Howard was staying, in the presidential guest house, the Blair House. The impact on the Prime Minister's world view was incisive. He was merely following a bipartisan pattern of appreciation of the American presidential favour, but now a bond was made, and intensified.

If George W Bush had replaced his father with Vice President Cheney as a father figure and if George W Bush did not know that Cheney thought all the stuff Bush was to say about democracy and the cause of peace in going to war in Iraq was nonsense, here now was cousin Howard, warmly alongside, equally dangerously naïve, less wise than George, no less admiring of uncle Cheney.

Less worldly wise, but immensely wise to Australia's domestic vulnerabilities. Home

in September, children overboard in October, elected in November. Hey presto, and off to war in Iraq in 2003. (Let us not speak of Afghanistan, war begun by Britain in 1837, given a great boost by the USSR and the CIA in the 1980s, about to destroy Pakistan. Too hard, that subject; too secret, it's the SAS there...) King of intervention, champion of the power of force and overruling Cabinet and precedent and promises now. By 2004, Tampa on the heels of the GST.

Why hasn't the failure of intervention in Iraq diminished expectation of military intervention in the Northern Territory? In part because this is the Prime Minister who told the press in, of all places, Viet-Nam, back in November 2006: "... if I ever develop reservations, well I hope I would have the grace to keep them to myself." In part it is profoundly the Prime Minister who took away our vocabulary of contrary ideas and gave us 'security' in the form of defining nearly everything in terms of whether it is his foe or not.

Now we have intervention in hospitals in another show of "pistols before dawn" on YouTube. And the Member for Gilmore rides out again in the afternoon calling "intervene here, intervene here." When you look at that populist cry to the cranky to take over hospitals, where is the sense of how things fit together, all the allied services and the links to greater hospitals, the networks of professional and support connections. Next thing someone will put the Army into child protection...

We need a vocabulary to express healthier points of view. Aha, there's the ALP! Or is there?

We must have change... Ah, excuse me Kevin, we must have change?

It's hard to know, when an Opposition adopts a low profile, whether it will recover from being hunched later. Is maintaining a low profile on moral issues a non-core promise?

COUNCIL OUT OF STEP
ON CLIMATE CHANGE
Richard Bates

We all know that climate change is the biggest challenge humans have ever faced and it is understandable that individuals shy away from it as all too scary and all too hard. But at least you would think that everyone agrees that, whatever the causes, the climate is changing and that we need to take some sort of action to cope with it. Judging by the position of most of our fellow councillors on Shoalhaven City Council towards climate change though, I have my doubts.

Last August a recommendation was put to Council by staff that, "Council stay abreast of current research into the impact of climate change and consider measures to mitigate impacts in new policies developed where appropriate".

A perfectly reasonable proposal you might think — it was voted down 5-7! — Shoalhaven City Council had refused to take climate change seriously!

Then the world changed and everyone woke up to the reality of climate change, all levels of government addressed it and nearly a year had passed when Council staff put it to Council again last meeting.

It was defeated again! — Council still refuses to recognise the merit of taking climate change seriously!

Council is however to hold a councillor/staff workshop on the issue so all is not lost.

All the world's most eminent scientists, environmentalists and economists are united in their call for urgent action to combat climate change.

Federal and State governments are addressing the issue as are communities such as Kangaroo Valley who are proposing to become carbon-neutral.

What level of government is missing in this equation here in the Shoalhaven?

70 NSW councils have signed up for the Cities for Climate Protection program but not Shoalhaven; all of the coastal councils south of Sydney have signed up except us. The Local Government and Shires Association have called for all NSW mayors to sign an agreement on climate change — the letter to our mayor was filed without action.

Both State and Federal Local Government Conferences this year have climate change as key-note forums. The theme for Local Government Week this year is "A Climate For Change" — Council's media release doesn't even mention it. ■

VINCENTIA SUBDIVISION GIVEN GO AHEAD
Richard Bates

Residential subdivision (over 600 houses) by Stockland at the Vincentia crossroads has been approved by NSW Planning Minister Sartor. The community has fought this long and hard with the final hand being played out over the EPBC Act which has failed to save this site from inappropriate over-development. Threatened species on site now face a difficult future if one at all. It will be impossible for this development not to have a negative result environmentally, economically and socially with huge impacts on flora and fauna, the pristine headwaters of Moona Moona Creek which flows into Jervis Bay less than a kilometre away, local small business and the road network. Once the suburb is built then the commercial centre will be justified but in the meantime we are left with a 600 lot suburb with no supporting infrastructure. Bad planning has led to the wrong development being located at the wrong location — developers rule. Minister Sartor has given himself extraordinary powers to take over planning decisions from councils that get held up because the proposals exceed height limits, are in the wrong zones, impact on threatened species etc. He has also criticized Shoalhaven City Council recently for inappropriate development and then approves this!

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