

## Going, Going, Gone! A Defining Event in Our Shire's History

On Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 2008 an Extraordinary Meeting of Wingecarribee Shire Council will convene at Bowral Memorial Hall to consider Final Reclassification of Community Land in the Local Environmental Plan.

### **Another Extraordinary meeting on April 30<sup>th</sup> will determine the Final Endorsement of the Draft LEP.**

Councillors supporting the sale of Community Green Space state it is "inexorably linked" to the funding of a Leisure Centre, yet they are unable, or unwilling, to confirm what the Centre will cost to build and operate, or disclose the potential financial liabilities likely to burden Ratepayers for decades.

The present council majority are neither practically, nor politically, in a position to ensure the indoor pool will be built. Are they positioning **Our Assets** for developers to buy prior to the Public Poll, and election.

### **Are We April Fools?**

On February 27<sup>th</sup> an amendment was proposed by Clr M. Murray, and seconded by Clr P. George. Part One of the amendment read: "1. THAT a Council poll be held at the next election to determine public support for the construction of a Leisure Centre **and the funding model.**" The amendment passed.

By proceeding with the reclassification, and likely sale, of Public Assets the council majority is effectively ignoring its own amendment and implementing a funding model in April, despite the fact it is supposedly the subject of a September Public Opinion Poll. Will any of these assets remain by September? Are we their April Fools?

### **Is Bowral Pool Permanently Closed?**

Of particular note among the Community Assets listed for disposal is the Bowral Pool and its parkland. It is rumoured tenders are already submitted for this highly prized piece of real estate, with the top bid coming from a nursing home or hotel developer.

In the event this irreplaceable Public Asset is reclassified we must demand that council not proceed with its sale until a public asset offering equivalent facilities is operational, and accessible to those presently using Bowral Pool and its surrounds.

### **Who and Why?**

### **Are there provisions in the Draft LEP allowing for substantial development of RU1, RU2 and E3 Green Space?**

Is this provision the basis for developer Sam Ibrahim's remarks in the 26/02/08 Financial Review that he seeks expressions of interest around \$8.5 million for his 57 hectare Highlands property? He stated, "**We did a bit of homework and it's got development potential for a 300-room resort and convention centre suitable for an investor or lifestyle purchaser.**" Mr. Ibrahim's land is a principal view from the Oxley Hill Road linking Berrima and Bowral.

- The Draft LEP's stated objectives include, "to maintain Wingecarribee's original settlement pattern of towns and villages dispersed throughout a rural and native vegetation landscape,.. "
- Who helped Mr. Ibrahim with his "homework", and what LEP interpretation was applied?
- Are the stated objectives for rural zones (RU1, RU2 and E3) to be overridden by Clause 48?
- Who drafted Clause 48, and why was it inserted?

Draft LEP **Clause 48** reads in part: "**Despite any other provision of this Plan, development consent may be granted for carrying out development on land to which this clause applies for the purposes of a restaurant, café, function centre or serviced apartments...**" This ominous clause was inserted into the draft LEP by an apparently invisible hand, described by a council staffer as the "tourism people."

If You Care, Be There  
3.30 p.m. 16<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> April  
Bowral Memorial Hall

Contact: [editor@highlandseye.com](mailto:editor@highlandseye.com)  
For background and updates please visit  
[www.savethehighlands.net](http://www.savethehighlands.net).

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## Is the Leisure Centre a Trojan Horse?



Trojan Horse may be defined as, “any person, thing, stratagem, or the like intended to overthrow or defeat by subversion from within.”

### Consider these Leisure Centre Facts

#### Heating Requirement

- Main pool will have about 1800 tonne of water and 1000 tonne of concrete - a water capacity equivalent to approximately 10,000 domestic water heaters: about what we have in the Shire. The small pool holds another 300 tonne of water.
- Temperature of the main pool needs to be at least 28.5C, small pool at least 30.5C, and air temp 2C higher, for 365 days a year.
- Based on evidence from a smaller indoor pool in a warmer climate, the heating costs is at least 15% of running cost, and independent cost estimates for the proposed Leisure Centre exceeds \$250k per annum.

#### Revenue

- Revenue from recreational swimming is usually negligible. Most income is from non-aquatic activities.
- Research at the University of SA *Centre for Environmental and Recreational Management* (CERM), indicates the user population for such centres is within a 5km radius, or 10 minutes traveling time - council's consultant use 20 minutes traveling time. CERM confirms such centres depend on repeat visits, and people further away make fewer visits. A small population percentage frequently use these facilities, and the majority seldom do, if ever.

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#### Revenue

- The effective maximum of potential visitors is 15,000, without justification Council uses 32,000.
- Council uses visitation rates that are not applicable (e.g. Forster which has a small pool and supports numerous non aquatic activities).
- Council expects 190,000 visits a year. This means for 14 hours a day, 363 days a year, someone must enter the Centre every 1 minute and 30 seconds.
- Council forecast growth in income of 3% pa from a population growth of 0.8%.

#### Depreciation & Maintenance

- Professionals estimate a Leisure Centre life span of 20 - 30yrs. If 30 years, building depreciation is \$566,667 per annum. Council has allowed just \$50,000 p.a., **equating to a 340 years life span.**
- In addition, regular maintenance and repairs are high, especially so in a cool climate region.
- After 30yrs, if not sooner, demolition cost may exceed millions of dollars, and add a substantial annual expense, for which there is no provision.

#### Risk Factors and so called *Treatments*

Visit [www.savethehighlands.net](http://www.savethehighlands.net). for details.

The questions thus arise.

- **Is the Leisure Centre proposal a Trojan Horse, riddled with serious errors and omissions?**
- **Is it being used to cynically justify the stripping of Community Assets?**

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## What You Can Do



### Speak Out

**Tell friends** what is happening.

**Call a Councillor** and put questions raised in Highlands Eye and other publications. You may want to know or ask **do you have a mandate to do this?**

- Why did councillors not publicly disclose a Leisure Centre funding model prior to the election?
- **94%** of the recorded votes at reclassification hearings opposed the sale of public lands. Was that not a public poll?
- Why claim the LEP process **requires** reclassification of Community Lands?

**Why claim private land held in the Highland is equivalent to Community Accessible Lands?**

- Try walking your dog, having a picnic, or playing on private property.

### Be Actively Involved

- Join a Community Group
- Sign a Petition
- Volunteer to Help.

### Think About It

- What are the Highlands for you? Parks and fields or high-density living and huge retail boxes.
- Do you want the future of our rural, and environmentally sensitive lands, subject to the dubious interpretations of nebulous guidelines?

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