



The Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association Inc.

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To Ministers Griffin & Stokes

Thank you both for meeting with us and Deon van Rensberg, A/Executive Director Park Operations Coastal NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) on Thursday 19 January 2023.

You'll be aware that we held a successful rally on Sunday 22nd January 2023, opposing the draft Plan of Management (PoM) for Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, specifically its mention of providing overnight accommodation on the Barrenjoey Headland. Despite inclement weather, an estimated 350 people from the local community attended.

We received widespread coverage in the local and national press (The Sydney Morning Herald and The Daily Telegraph) as well as having segments in news bulletins broadcast on Channels 7 and 9.

Rory Amon, Liberal aspirant to the seat of Pittwater, spoke at the rally and voiced his opposition to overnight accommodation on the Headland. He relayed to the audience the concessions you made to him in relation to the PoM when you met with him:

- The PoM won't be signed off before the state election;
- A Strategic Reference Group, drawn from community groups and local experts, will be formed to assist in finalising the new PoM;
- That the Boatman's Cottage will be retained for the exclusive use of a NPWS caretaker;
- There will be no widening of the access path to the headland.

Among the other speakers who addressed the rally was the Hon. Penny Sharpe, Shadow Minister for the Environment & Heritage and her views supported those of the community. At the end of the rally, a motion was put to the crowd that sought to:

- Remove any reference to "accommodation" in relation to Barrenjoey Headland;
- Alter the PoM to prevent NPWS or the Minister making Barrenjoey Headland available for any purpose which might relate to accommodation;
- To protect and preserve the natural, cultural, historic and built environments of the headland in accordance with the National Parks and Wildlife Act;
- Encourage daytime use of assets on the headland for cultural, educational, artistic and informational use;
- To prepare a separate PoM specifically for Barrenjoey Headland.

With a show of hands, this motion passed unanimously.

A petition on change.org that has similar aims, started shortly before the rally, continues to gain momentum and is now approaching 2000 signatures.

Whilst we appreciate the concessions made to Rory Amon, with the state election but weeks away, can you please confirm them in writing, which will allow us to communicate this to our members and the broader community?

However, these assurances do not meet the main objection to the new draft Plan of Management for Ku-ring-gai National Park which would allow NPWS to commercially let the two Assistant Lighthouse Keepers' cottages on Barrenjoey Headland.

You stated that other Lighthouses on the NSW coast are let successfully but that is not the point. It is common sense that each location should be considered separately and the Barrenjoey Lighthouse complex is very different from the others both because of its remoteness with lack of vehicular access and also its historical significance since the buildings have not been adapted for modern use. The buildings are the oldest remaining structures in Pittwater and their setting on a wild and beautiful headland untouched by modern infrastructure gives them a unique appeal. It is a rich historical area, both Aboriginal and Settler, and there is opportunity to disseminate this and widen the appeal of the area even further. It is hugely valued in its untouched state as was demonstrated in 2013 and now again ten years later. Free public access to areas such as the Headland, wild and with spectacular views yet within reach of many people, as demonstrated by the 250,000 who visit each year, cannot be allowed to disappear and there is major discontent that the State Government is proving incapable or unwilling to stop it. In fact this proposal encourages it, courting huge electoral disapproval in the process, when there is opportunity to secure local support for a practical yet visionary approach. We started our petition to remove commercial letting on Barrenjoey Headland from the PoM just over two weeks ago and we are approaching 2,000 signatures online and in person at our demonstration. This will continue to grow as we spread the message.

At our meeting with you, it was admitted that there were real practical difficulties to letting the cottages commercially – the huge expense of converting the cottages, difficult access for visitors across a beach (often completely underwater) and up a steep track without a car, safety particularly at night even if expensive lighting is installed on the track, the difficulty of rescuing people in a medical emergency - and yet the Government seems not willing to remove this most undesirable option from the POM and concentrate on other options – and there are many – to use the buildings and raise funds. An important effect for the public will be that their access to these buildings will be restricted in favour of those who can afford to pay the high price of the necessary investment. Those who understand the issues object to this drive for exclusivity as well as the detrimental effect on our 1881 legacy and a unique environment.

This is a matter which transcends the short term aims of the electoral cycle. There is a growing body of opinion in this area (which we will continue to foster) that our State Government needs to understand the increasing desire to preserve our heritage and our environment. There is little to gain for the State Government in this situation and a lot to lose. It will be a running sore in the lead-up to an election particularly since all other candidates oppose the proposal.

Your suggestion of a Stakeholders' Community Reference Group is a good one and we would be happy to participate and discuss practical uses for the buildings providing any reference to "accommodation" in relation to Barrenjoey Headland is removed from the draft plan.

I have sent by a separate email recent photographs of the interior of the cottages on Barrenjoey Headland. The NPWS has not maintained these important heritage cottages. They are in a deplorable state, as the photographs show, with a massive hole in the roof of one of the buildings. This at least should be addressed and repaired urgently. NPWS is required under the Heritage Act to maintain Heritage Buildings. The state of these buildings reflects poorly on the NPWS management and your Heritage Ministry.

Thank you once again for meeting with Palm Beach and Whale Beach Association.

I hope we can find a satisfactory solution to preserve the Barrenjoey Headland and its Heritage Cottages.

Yours sincerely

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