



The Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association Inc.

www.pbwba.org.au | PO Box 2 Palm Beach NSW 2108

14 March 2023

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

DR SOPHIE SCAMPS MP MEMBER FOR MACKELLER

ROB STOKES MLA – MINISTER FOR CITIES, ACTIVE TRANSPORT &

JAMES GRIFFIN MLA – MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE

PENNY SHARP MLC FOR SHADOW MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE

Good morning,

When the Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association (PBWBA) inspected the Assistant Lighthouse Keepers Cottages on Barrenjoey Headland in 2019, we were assured that a hole in the roof of one cottage had been repaired and that the damage to the interior would be made good. A recent inspection now shows that the roof has again been patched but the internal damage to the ceiling has not been repaired and that the exterior and surrounds of the cottages need maintenance. It is understood that NPWS is short of funds but this is not a good signal for its care of historic premises. Either NPWS don't have the money or they don't care.

Barrenjoey Headland, as part of Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park, is included in the Australian National Heritage List 2003 and, as such, the approval of the Federal Minister of Environment would appear to be necessary for any development of the buildings on the Headland. Because of its historic buildings, a factor which does not occur elsewhere in this national park, and the particular significance of the lighthouse to both State and Commonwealth heritage, it is appropriate that the Headland should have its own separate plan of management.

According to the Commonwealth's National Heritage List, one of the two cottages occupied by Jervis Sparks in the 1950's was restored by him in the style of the early 1800's. Given that fact and also that no services are available within the cottages except a wood-burning stove, (i.e. there is no electricity, running

water, toilet or washing facilities within the actual cottages), it is clear that substantial work would be required to bring them up to the current standard for premium short-term accommodation. There is no business plan for this work and hence no analysis of the likely cost or return on the investment. However it is likely that the pay-back period will be many years. It is also likely that the two cottages on their own would be unable to provide a realistic return to NPWS without the addition of additional accommodation on the headland, further reducing accessibility for the general public and damaging the natural environment.

All of this strengthens our argument that the Headland is not suitable for the provision of short-term accommodation and we still believe very strongly that the words "short-term accommodation" as a possible use of the cottages should be deleted from the proposed plan of management for Ku-Ring-Gai Chase National Park (PoM).

We believe that Minister Griffin's suggestion of a stakeholder reference group has considerable merit as a worthwhile mechanism for inclusion in PoM's generally and provision for this should be included in the Ku-Ring-gai Chase PoM before it goes to the Minister for approval. It would be a sign of good faith with the community for the SRG to be set up quickly now; the community concern about the headland remains at a high level. Our petition continues to gather signatures.

We remain happy to work with NPWS and local bodies to identify possible alternative uses (excluding short term accommodation) either as part of a reference group or as PBWBA, and we have recently gained access to additional expertise which would assist us in contributing to the process of identifying alternative uses.

We also believe that several recent events should influence the decision on the PoM: -

- (a) The announcement of a new national park of more than 400,000 hectares between Tibooburra and Wanaaring will further stress the inadequate resources of NPWS but also reinforce the view that its strength is the management of parks and wildlife, rather than the management of historic buildings.
- (b) Its proposals for Strickland House in Nielsen Park on Sydney Harbour are of major concern to all Sydneysiders. This is the only publicly-owned historic mansion left on the Sydney Harbour foreshore and it has a fascinating history. It's value would be destroyed if the NWPS proposals as outlined in the Sun-Herald of 26 February were to proceed. Again, alternative uses need to be identified. Other, admittedly less historic, properties in this Park have already been "re-purposed" for accommodation and have in the process lost their integrity and the public has lost the use of them.

- (c) Similar reservations surround the NPWS plans for an historic property on Port Hacking.
- (d) The proposed 99-year lease of Cadman's Cottage, the oldest building in the City of Sydney and located within the most important historic precinct of Sydney, for who knows what purpose, appears inappropriate and lacks transparency. It should be used as a museum of the early days of the Colony of Sydney.

The conclusions which we draw from these events and which we would commend to you are: -

- (a) NPWS should concentrate on its traditional task of managing wildlife and bush reserves and national parks and be properly funded to do so.
- (b) The management of historic buildings like the Barrenjoey Headland and Strickland House and Cadman's Cottage should be transferred to the Historic Houses division of Museums of New South Wales for them to manage, in the public interest. They are much better placed to consider alternative uses.

The Barrenjoey Headland is the Jewel in the Crown of Pittwater and must be present for a present and future generations.

Yours truly,

A/Prof Richard West AM

President PBWBA