

**Submission
No 19**

INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SYDNEY HARBOUR FORESHORE AUTHORITY

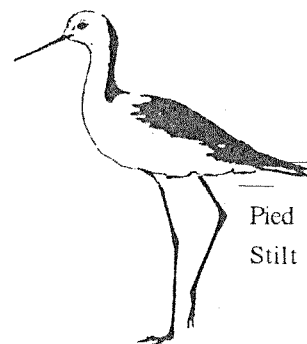
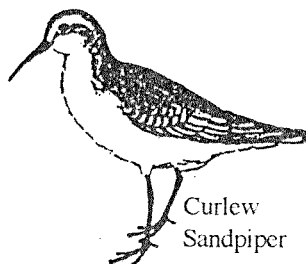
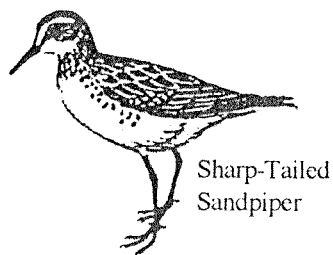
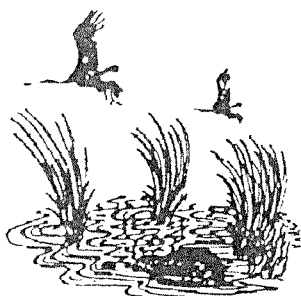
Organisation: Rockdale Wetlands Preservation Society
Name: Mr Ronald Rayner
Position: President
Telephone:
Date Received: 28/05/2004

Subject:

Summary

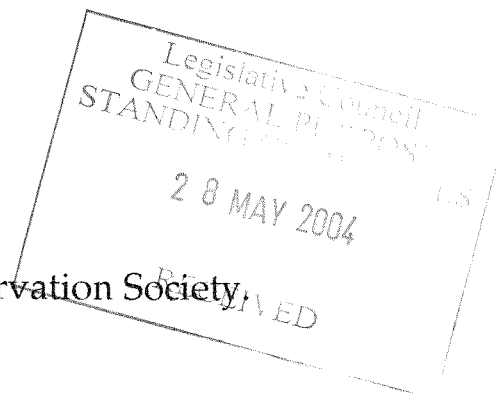
Rockdale Wetlands Preservation Society

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The Sydney Harbour Foreshores Authority Inquiry Upper
House Committee

General Purpose Standing Committee No 4
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Submission on behalf of the Rockdale Wetlands Preservation Society

Dear Sir / Madam

The Rockdale Wetland Preservation Society welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

We have no direct knowledge of the internal management processes of SHFA and hence cannot speak in Term of Reference 1 of the inquiry. However, we would like to raise other matters, under Term of Reference 2 "Any other relevant matters".

Cooks Cove

Several years ago a development proposal, under the name, Cooks Cove, was announced over public land in the City of Rockdale. The proposal involved the establishment of a high tech industrial park on the site currently occupied by Kogarah golf course, and the establishment of the golf course to land further south, the relocation to elsewhere in Rockdale of sporting facilities currently occupying the land earmarked for the golf course. The proposal would have resulted in a loss of open space in Rockdale and a much greater loss of public open space.

The proposal was originally advanced in the name of SHFA, but, shortly thereafter, the controlling body became the Cooks Cove Development Corporation. The change appears to have been merely semantic, as CCDC appears to be merely a subset of SHFA.

Questions which were never adequately answered include -

- how did SHFA come to be involved in a development proposal on the Cooks River (which is not even in the same catchment as Sydney Harbour)
- On what basis was CCDC established and what is the relationship between SHFA and CCDC

The proposal is not compatible with current planning restrictions. At the time the proposal was announced it was accompanied by three documents -

- * a draft regional Environmental Plan,
- * a draft Masterplan and an environmental study prepared to support the Masterplan.

* The environmental study was commissioned by a development company then known as Trafalgar. How did Trafalgar achieve preferred developer status without there apparently being a tender process and what was the relationship between SHFA and Trafalgar?

In so far as information has been made available it appears that the golf club will have exclusive use of public land under very favourable terms - is this a appropriate use of public resources.

The land to be included in the Cooks Cove development covered a variety of tenures, including Council land. It is our understanding that council gave up its interest in the land and it has been transferred to the government.

- what arrangements exist between Rockdale City Council and SHFA, and if the development does not occur will Council receive recompense?

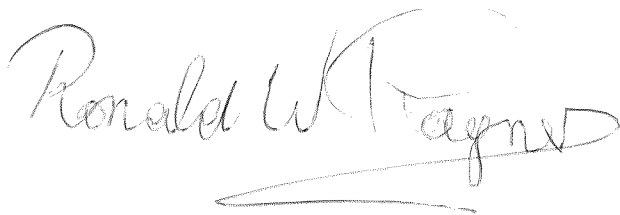
The land concerned has many features of high conservation value, but also serious environmental constraints (contaminated land). There is also a need to to ensure compatibility with operation of Kingsford Smith airport. There was little evidence in the documentation that these matters had been properly assessed. The planning assessment methods and processes were certainly not transparent but opaque in the extreme. There appeared to be a

deliberate policy of excluding and confusing the public. There was an attempt to hard sell the project, and attempts to raise concerns were not welcomed.

However, despite all the activity at the time the draft plans were displayed (a period which was extended by the need to redisplay because the first display period involved incomplete documents) there has been deathly silence. If the project was so important and urgent why has there been this very extended hiatus?

It is perhaps not the normal practice to make a submission to an Inquiry which raises more questions than it answers. However, we have been frustrated in our attempts to understand the basis for, and the planning processes associated with, the Cooks Cove Proposal. The whole saga raises important issues about the the use of public lands and the involvement of the public in planning for public lands. Given the central, if mysterious, role SHFA has played in the proposal we hope that the Inquiry is able to cast light on the process and to make recommendation which will lead to greater transparency in the future, and a willingness to engage the public in a meaningful way in determining the future of important public lands.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ronald W Rayner". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Ronald W Rayner

President

26/5/04