

INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SYDNEY HARBOUR FORESHORE AUTHORITY

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Date Received: 28/05/2004

Subject:

Summary

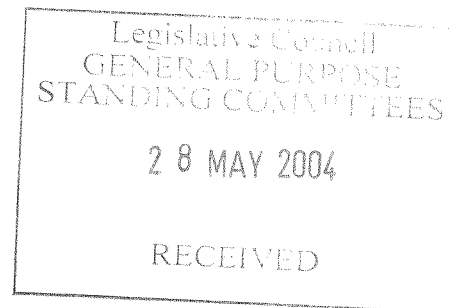


COAST & WETLANDS SOCIETY INCORPORATED

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24th May 2004

SHFA Inquiry
General Purpose Standing Committee
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY 2000



The Coast and Wetlands Society Inc. welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry.

The Society has no knowledge of the internal management or operations of SHFA. Hence we are not able to comment on term of reference 1. However, we would like to make comment in relation to "Other relevant matters".

The Society has had a long standing interest in coastal zone management and sustainability of coastal resources and hence has a deep interest in Sydney Harbour.

One of the concerns in relation to the Harbour is the plethora of bodies, at all levels of government, with responsibilities for different aspects of management. Given the diversity of activities which society expects to be accommodated on the Harbour it would be unrealistic for all activities to be the responsibility of a single authority. Nevertheless the present arrangements appear to lack any clearly articulated overall objectives and mechanisms for co-ordination. SHFA is one of the players in the mix but we have difficulty with the concept of the same authority being in different circumstances both a consent authority and a promoter of development.

However, the major matter which we wish to draw to the Committee's attention is the Cooks Cove development proposal.

The proposal involves the relocation of Kogarah Golf Course, and the development of a 'high-tech' industrial park on the site of the current course. Other existing sporting facilities would be relocated to elsewhere in Rockdale. There would be a net loss of both total open space and of public open space (as what is currently open space is alienated by the relocated golf course).

Notwithstanding that the proposal is adjacent to Cooks River, the lead agency is SHFA. After the proposal was originally announced the name of the agency involved changed to the Cooks Cove Development Corporation, but this appears to be a semantic sleight of hand

as the CCDC appears for all intents and purposes to be SHFA. How SHFA came to be involved in a proposal outside Sydney Harbour, and the nature of the relationship between SHFA and CCDC may hopefully be clarified by the Committee.

The Cooks Cove proposal is not possible under current zoning.

The announcement of the proposal was accompanied by the display of a draft REP and a draft Masterplan. The simultaneous display of the two plans is of concern. In our view display should have been sequential as the draft Masterplan displayed presumed the unaltered acceptance of the REP – an approach scarcely designed to engender confidence that submissions on the draft REP would be given serious consideration.

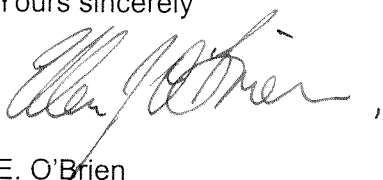
The site for the proposal includes important wetlands. The draft documents did not provide satisfactory answers to the question of how these would be managed in future. Rather this was to be left to some as yet unprepared wetlands plan – there was no indication as to the eventual status of such a plan, or to whether there would be any public comment phase prior to its adoption.

The processes by which the proposal was developed were not open. The whole saga to date has lacked transparency. Since the close of the period for submissions there has been resounding silence. What is the current status of the project? Why has it taken so long to reach a decision on whether to adopt, amend or reject the draft REP and Masterplan.

We recognize the continuing pressure on Sydney to accommodate a rapidly growing population. No area will be immune from impacts, and there will undoubtedly be increased development in Rockdale. However, in planning for the increased population there is an urgent need to protect and enhance open space rather than to encourage its loss. Public confidence in the planning process is at risk of erosion when arms of government like SHFA (if acting in the form of the Cooks Cove Development Corporation) are seen to be promoting development which is of questionable public good.

We hope that the Committee shares our concerns, and will seek to explore SHFA's role in Cooks Cove and make an assessment as to whether that role was inappropriate.

Yours sincerely



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