

Attachment 9:

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

COMMENTS TABLED WITH C&A IN RELATION TO WOKSHOPS, REGIONAL FORUM AND CHARRETTE

Excerpt from C&A Lower Hunter Lands,
Conservation and Development – Southern
Estates Charette Report

Version 1.6, 30 August 2007

Catherine Hill Bay

Attendance of the 3 representatives of the Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association at the Regional Forum and the Charette of 27 – 30 August **does not imply acceptance or agreement with any of the outcomes of the charette process.**

Our representatives outlined the dissatisfaction of the community with the conduct and reporting in relation to the community workshops held at Swansea RSL on 2 and 4 August 2007. These workshops were clearly structured to prevent meaningful discussion of community expectations and concerns. The process involved a series of superficial questions and the recording of limited responses. These responses were later manipulated by Coal & Allied and formed input to the Southern Estate Charette Guide, dated August 2007.

The communities of Catherine Hill Bay and Nords Wharf regard the outcomes reported to be inaccurate and misleading. An example of this is evident through a comparison of table 3, p 26 and table 5, pp 27 and 28 of the Southern Charettes Reference Guide. In table 3 it should be noted that Catherine Hill Bay attendees recorded 58 objections to development under the category of "no development". Other issues were then classified according to a level of significance based on the frequency of mentions. This is an invalid methodology. All issues raised were of the highest priority. Table 5 contradicts table 3 by noting that open space is a low priority for Catherine Hill Bay residents; that visual impacts are a medium priority; and that development yields are also a low priority, this is clearly fallacious. **This misrepresentation undermines our confidence in the methodology used by Coal & Allied.**

The lack of objective analysis of the existing condition and appropriate summaries of new condition, required a large amount of the time to be spent educating some of the consultants on basic issues. While the community was clear on their preference for no development they were prepared to discuss advantages and disadvantages of various options. These positions were generally disregarded in the resulting options that were prepared.

Since 1994, Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association has regularly surveyed community attitudes and priorities. Immediately prior to the Swansea workshop, Catherine Hill Bay residents met on the 20th May 2007 in preparation. **The community was unanimous in describing the key attributes of our village as:**

The village is seen as an historically linked group of settlements with surrounding bushland and coastal landscapes.

The streetscape along Flowers Drive and the three main side roads has intact features from its origin as a planned mining village, the single storey houses, all similar and with bush or coastal views, give an 'intactness' to the settlement.

Relative isolation from other communities is seen as a positive, with mention of the community spirit, friendliness and trust between residents and visitors. However, the intrusion of trail bikes and traffic is a widespread concern. While some residents want better mobile phone reception, others are happy to have no reception.

Infrastructure is minimal and facilities are limited to the Fire Station, bowling club and recreation areas like the oval and playground. The bowling clubs prominent façade is not highly regarded. There is a strong community spirit with a diversity of people from different backgrounds. Strong friendships, good neighbours and low crime rates give a 'country town' feel to the place.

Community organisations are highly regarded, particularly the Progress Association, Dunecare, surf club, bowling club, board-riders club, tennis club and RSL.

While there is general agreement that the town is an historical place, many specific aspects are highly valued. These include:

- The layout of the town with its ribbon development and grassy commons adjacent all houses set in bushland.
- Mine Camp.
- Middle Camp.
- Cemetery.
- Sawmill Camp.
- Historic houses: those which are virtually unaltered since construction a century ago as well as those still let by Coal & Allied.
- School and its Norfolk Island Pines.
- Tennis court and clubroom.
- The grassed open common areas that have been maintained and used as recreational space by the community for 100 years.
- Railway.
- Jetty.
- Churches.

Bush, lagoon and surf are seen as dominant features of the area and the integration of townscape with landscape is highly valued. Residents comment about the communal grassed open space to the east and west of Flowers Drive and also describe the 'picturesque houses' of Middle Camp.

In summary the community was very united about its priorities and restated what has been reinforced over a long time by community surveys. They desire:

- No development because of the heritage and environmental sensitivity of the area.
- No development because of C&A's previous commitment to return 100 percent of their lands to open space upon the cessation of mining.
- No development because of the understanding by community that Coal & Allied would honour that promise.
- The Bay and Middle Camp comprise Catherine Hill Bay.
- Leave a visual and landscape buffer outside of the grassed commons to protect environmental value to the whole area.
- Traffic problems should be acknowledged and not be exacerbated by any future outcomes.

We reiterate that the heritage significance of Middle Camp and Catherine Hill Bay is more than simply the built form of houses on their lots. It is the ribbon of the houses set in their open grassed commons. These commons have formed communal space for 100 years. All of this is located within the broader bushland setting. This total ensemble is historically significant.

We also note that during days one and two of the charette reference was frequently made to the supposed endorsement of the quantum of development by experts within both the **Department of Planning and the Department of Environment and Conservation**. Publicly available documents

record advice from senior Departmental experts that Catherine Hill Bay is not suitable for development.

The May 2006 Draft Cabinet Report titled *Review of Major Hunter Landholders Development and Conservation Proposals* reviews the proposal from Coal & Allied and others for development potential on their lands. "The Wallarah Peninsula is rich in biodiversity, as well as providing keystone conservation landscape that links two sets of coastal habitat (littoral and estuarine). The proposed development areas expand on the existing settlements of Catherine Hill Bay, Moonee, Nords Wharf and Gwandalan. In the case of Catherine Hill Bay the proposed development dwarfs the existing coastal village. The development area proposed for Catherine Hill Bay is not appropriate to the scale or location of existing settlements. The Coal and Allied lands are of such significance that even without dedication the Department of Environment and Conservation will seek acquisition using funds raised through infrastructure levies."