

Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association

Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association and Dune Care Inc.

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www.catherinehillbay.org.au

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The heritage village of Catherine Hill Bay, one of the most popular and scenic spots on the NSW coast, is threatened with destruction. A development proposal from the Rose Group would swamp the existing southern half of the village with a huge swathe of suburban housing.

An earlier deal between the Rose Group and the NSW government was rejected by Justice Lloyd of the Land and Environment Court, who bluntly called it a “land bribe”. However, the government had found another way to allow Rose to proceed: it changed the zoning of the area from “conservation and coastal acquisition” to “residential”!

Now the Rose Group has submitted a new development proposal that is even more destructive than the proposal rejected by Justice Lloyd. It contains 600 lots, many of them large enough to be further subdivided, which would overwhelm the existing 50 houses, flood the beach area with cars and permanently destroy the beauty of the coastline.

The Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association has never been against appropriate residential housing. But building hundreds of new houses on top of a tiny heritage village is not appropriate; it would destroy the very thing that makes this part of the world unique.

The Rose Group’s original development plans for Catherine Hill Bay were rejected by the Lake Macquarie Council. Rose appealed to the Land and Environment Court and lost. The state government then overruled the council and the court, using the Part 3A legislation and signing a deal with the Rose Group to allow the development. This deal was the “land bribe” overruled by Justice Thomas, but still the government arranges for Rose’s development to go ahead.

Catherine Hill Bay is the only state-listed heritage village on the coast of NSW. Until now, this area of the coast has been available to everyone, and has been popular precisely because it is not developed. Under Lake Macquarie Council’s planning rules, the area was protected.

An expert Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel, dealing with the Rose Group’s earlier proposal, recommended that development on the headland be lowered and moved back from the cliff edge and that public access to Moonee beach be assured by a public perimeter road. The expert panel required bushland corridors that linked open spaces. It referred to the development of “discreet hamlets” with individual characters. Rose’s latest proposal ignores these requirements and would create a vast expanse of suburban lots totally out of scale and overwhelming to this sensitive context.

The character and attributes of Catherine Hill Bay are rare. It is critical that any development be sympathetic to the coastal location, historic context and environmental conditions. The heritage and environmental values of the Catherine Hill Bay area must be retained for future generations and visitors to enjoy. Development that would spoil this unique place must not be permitted.

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