



FUCK OFF FRANK!

HOW ONE MAN COULD SINGLE-HANDEDLY KILL OUR COASTLINE. BY KIRK OWERS

The NSW coast will never be the same once Frank "Development King" Sartor is finished concreting it.

Frank Sartor is no stranger to controversy, angry constituents or bad press. While Lord Mayor of Sydney he faced sexual harassment accusations and upset Indigenous Australians by referring to an Aboriginal spokesman's "black arse". More recently he's attracted wide criticism for his performance as Planning Minister for NSW. Sartor's approval for a series of wildly unpopular housing developments has led some to question the current EPA laws and the developer-lobbying process. And with good reason.

In 2005 a change to the planning code – known as Part 3A – has made the Planning Minister the consenting authority for Major Projects which were previously handled by local councils [the criteria includes developments which are worth more than 50 million but also, frighteningly, those in "sensitive coastal environments"]. During 2005/2006 Sartor passed 316 of 350 proposals under the new law. Between December 2006 and June 2007 he rubber-stamped 100 approvals in a row. Some of these were projects which had previously been rejected by local councils for a number of sound environmental, social or economic reasons.

Executive Director of the Nature Conservation Council, Cate Faehrmann sums up the argument against the new planning code: "Clearly the Part 3A laws are benefiting developers to the detriment of the environment and the community, because virtually no proposal is ever refused. Environmental impact statements have become a thing of the past because the Minister can override them with a stroke of his pen."

One of Sartor's less popular interventions has been at Catherine Hill Bay, south of Newcastle. Catho, known for its good waves and laid-back vibe, is an old mining village of heritage and environmental interest. The Department of Planning advised against development; the Department of Environment and Conservation suggested the land be bought and preserved by the state. Two local councils knocked back the developer's plans, as did an independent assessor. Sartor's call? Start your bulldozers. If the developers get their way the sleepy hamlet will be nine times the size and its unique historical character obliterated.

Development issues, of course, are always multifaceted and often controversial.

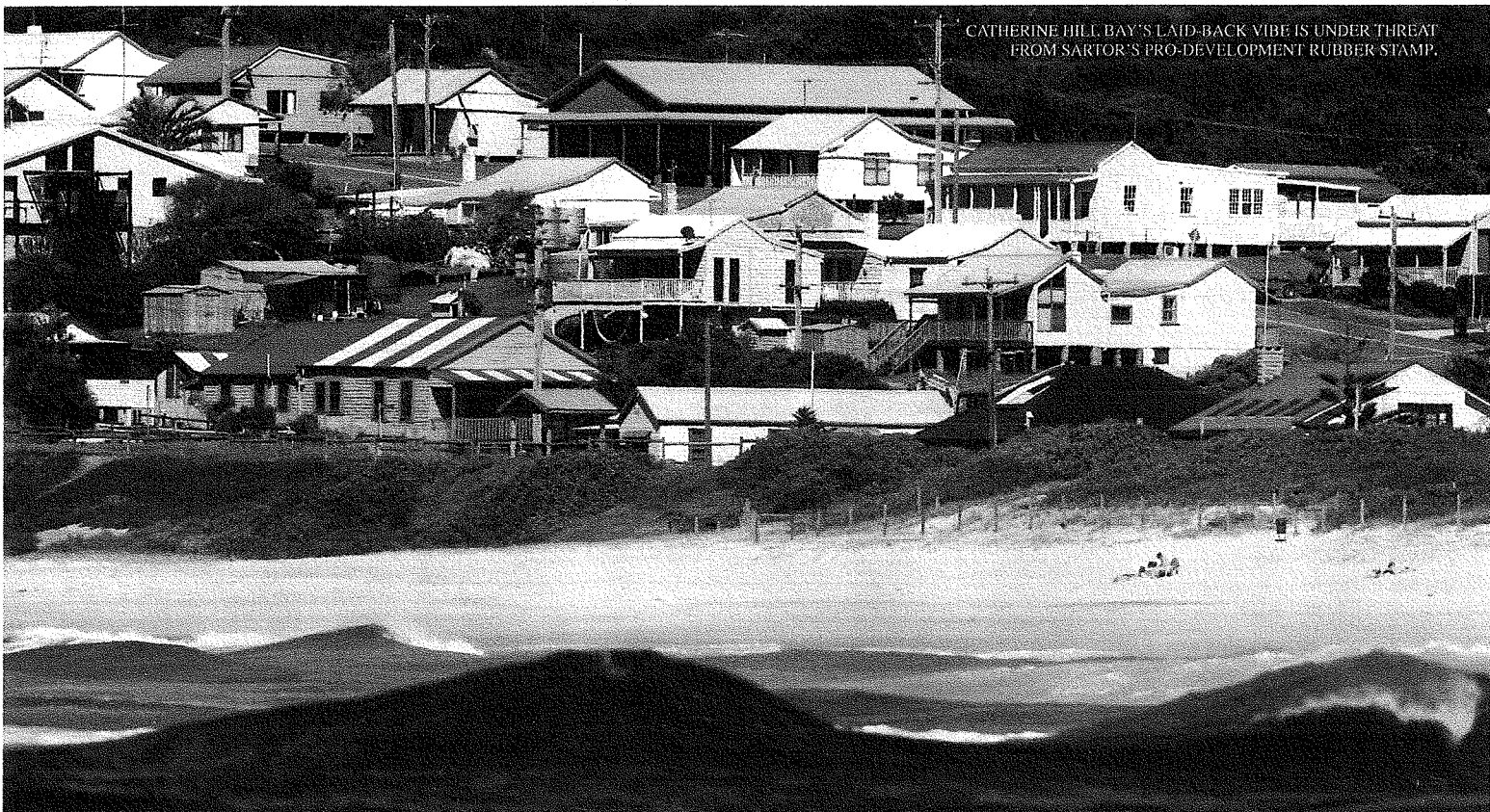
A fundamental anti-development stance is as ridiculous as a fundamental pro-development stance. Like them or loathe them, developers have a difficult job to perform. Anyone who regularly deals with bureaucrats and parochial not-in-my-backyarders for a living deserves unimpeded access to prescription sedatives. But do we really need to encourage the bastards?

As annoying as planning regulations, environmental and heritage codes etc. are to the potential builder, they are in place, surely, for good reason. You only have to look at the shithheap that results wherever developers are allowed a loose reign. Which is why Sartor's overruling power is such a vexing issue – especially when developers are major contributors to NSW Labor. Maddeningly, and despite growing criticism, Sartor is said to be toying with the idea of removing council's consent role altogether in a bid for yet more power.

Kathryn Greiner, a political opponent from way back, identified his tendencies for megalomania back in 2002. "Not a lot happens without Frank approving it, and that means every DA, every application, every move that the staff make. The word dictator has been used more than once." Talk to some of the locals out at Catherine Hill Bay, or any of the other local communities who are suffering under Frankie and the words aren't nearly as kind.

And here's a final reason to loathe the Dodgy Developer King. He's a hypocrite. A 2006 proposal to wedge 74 units next to his Beverly Park home was reported to have met with strong objection from the Sartor residence [via his wife, Monique Flannery]. At the same time the Minister is busy fast-tracking similarly unwanted housing projects across the state. Concrete the coast, dig up more coal – just don't mess with Frankie's backyard.

Further down the coast Wollongong's corruption and developer donation scandal has opened up a very big, very smelly can of worms. "The Farm" in Killalea State Park south of Kiama is another quality surf beach which is under threat. It has come to light that the Killalea developer, Babcock and Brown, tripled their donations to NSW ALP last year and are pushing for the development to be labelled a Major Project [which would make Frank Sartor the approval agent]. And who decides if the controversial new estate is to be classified as a Major Project? Frank Sartor. ☐



CATHERINE HILL BAY'S LAID-BACK VIBE IS UNDER THREAT FROM SARTOR'S PRO-DEVELOPMENT RUBBER STAMP.

US: THE POPE RIPPING AND THE 30 METRE BOAT THAT DROPPED IN AT PADANG

TRACKS

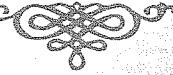


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