

The Sandon Point

Volume 1, Issue 1

A Community Bulletin for the Protection of Sandon Point

A FORM GUIDE TO THE PLAYERS

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

A genuinely eclectic mix of local identities, surfers, coal miners, steel workers, retirees, professionals, students, families, the employed and unemployed, locals and blow-ins. Over the years, they have galvanized into an unusually cohesive and culturally-enriching group. The strength of their commitment has resulted in a 24-hour on-site picket & information centre which has been operating for one year. The community's Valentine's Day blockade of earthmoving and construction equipment being brought on site (before a court hearing had finished), took place in front of 60 police, and security guards who toted guns and dogs. This display of their resolve demonstrates the depth of their fury at the manner in which this development proposal has been managed from the outset.

SANDON POINT ABORIGINAL TENT EMBASSY (SPATE)

At Mc Cauley's beach, the Embassy is staffed 24 hours a day, and has been in existence for over a year. Here, indigenous people have come at the request of the most senior law man in NSW, 94-year old elder Uncle Guboo Ted Thomas. Their role is to keep watch over the land- in particular, a known sacred burial site. **Roy (Dootch) Kennedy** is the main spokesperson for SPATE.

STOCKLAND, THE DEVELOPER

Stockland Constructors Pty Ltd is part of a multi-billion dollar investment company specialising in commercial, retail and residential real estate developments.

Nick Greiner, a former NSW premier, is vice president on Stockland's board of directors. He famously resigned as Premier as a result of an inquiry by his very own Independent Commission Against Corruption. After leaving politics, he accepted a position on the board of a giant multi-national tobacco corporation- perhaps a little ironic given his heavy personal involvement in the ground-breaking Quit Smoking campaign. - *No doubt his experience comes in handy in such a political stoush.* Stockland employee, **Nick Duncan**, in charge of the Sandon Point development project, is assisted by **Paul Hedge**.

WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL (till recently, ruled by the Labor Party)

Historically of dubious repute, the council was taken to the Land & Environment Court by Stockland for not approving their development within a set time limit.

The council is headed by mayor **George Harrison**, who, in 1999, was declared by Justice Einfeld of the Supreme Court in a separate matter to be 'unconscionable and willing to lie under oath'.

The council is also in dispute with **Ray Hannah**, a multi-million-dollar purchaser of additional land at Sandon Point. (His land was previously owned by ex-mayor, **Frank Arkell**.) Hannah claims that Council revoked the zoning approval for a caravan park and housing estate that they "guaranteed" him at purchase. This particular part of the Sandon Point site was subsequently acknowledged to be regularly flood and sea-

Overview of the Issue

The latest battle in the long-running saga over the future of land located between Thirroul & Bulli, namely Sandon Point & McCauley's Beach, is far from over. The current dispute is between a Sydney-based property developer, Stockland, and the local community.

The issues are wide-ranging and complex. This bulletin gives an overview of important past and recent events. Keeping it close at hand will enhance your understanding of future developments in the situation. (no pun intended!).

In 2000, Stockland submitted development applications to Wollongong Council for "Stages 1-6" of a new suburb it proposes to develop on the land lying between Thirroul &

Bulli. The division of the project into 20 stages so far, disguises the enormity of the proposal. If allowed to proceed, close to 1200 new dwellings would be built (including many on an existing factory site) - equating to an additional 3000 people in the area. The current population of Thirroul is 5400. There are no plans for infrastructure such as roads, shops, car parks, transport, schools, hospitals, police presence, community facilities and sewerage

affected and as such, is undevelopable. As of May '02, the status of Ray Hannah's land remains unresolved.

THE SKELETONS

A fully intact, ceremonial grave of great cultural significance was archaeologically exhumed following its discovery in the McCauley's Beach dunes, after a big storm in March, 1998. It contained a perfectly undisturbed skeleton, surrounded by ceremonial and sacred objects. This man was a **Kuradji** ('Clever fella'), buried around 6000 years ago.

Another skull was discovered 30 years earlier by, amazingly, the same sharp-eyed residents who spotted the Kuradji's grave.

There is local knowledge of up to 8 more skeletons having been dug up during the installation of sewerage pipes in the 1970s. The trail of their whereabouts has, for the moment, gone cold.

OTHER INDIGENOUS GROUPS IN THE AREA

Five major and four minor groups lay claim to having sacred and enduring cultural links to the site. These groups do not always see eye-to-eye due to familial ties and other political differences.

systems to accompany this massive increase in population. We believe Stockland would take its money & run, while the council would make a killing on skyrocketing rates for *still* no financial input into the area.

Of equal concern to residents is the manner in which this development has been allowed to proceed. We feel troubling decisions have been made at both state and local government levels. **There is clear evidence**

in numerous instances that illegal acts have been occurring, and that government guidelines are not being followed. Even the Land & Environment Court's verdict was based on flawed evidence. Under these circumstances, the community's collective outrage has necessitated our direct intervention to ensure that the proposed development does not proceed unless all existing laws and statutes are enforced and adhered to.

We are certain that if all the necessary research is *independently* carried out, there will be **compelling reasons for a complete rethink of this contentious development proposal.**

SOUTH COAST LABOUR COUNCIL (SCLC)

The area's governing union body placed a black ban on the Stockland site in March last year. SCLC leaders, **Arthur Rorris & Peter Wilson** also acted as go-betweens during the recent community blockade of the site. This indicates clear union acknowledgement of the importance of the site.

NSW GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS *

The following state authorities are involved in granting permission for development of the site: National Parks & Wildlife (NPWS), Dept of Land & Water Conservation (DLWC) Dept. of Urban Affairs & Planning (DUAP)- now called Planning NSW.

Despite years of recommendations that have been consistent in their content, these departments are *suddenly changing their advice* regarding Sandon Point. This, coupled with the *unwillingness to prosecute Stockland over laws they have already breached* on site, places question marks over their ability to oversee any proposed development.

THE STATE GOVERNMENT (LABOR) *

This government subscribes to a policy of urban consolidation. This policy is arguably driven

