

15 January 2017

Bayside (Rockdale) Council

Submission on DA-2017/179 – Cooks Cove Southern Precinct

Attention: Marta M Gonzalez-Valdes, Co-ordinator Major Assessment Team

Proposed new location of Kogarah Golf Course at Barton Park, Banksia and Cooks Cove high rise/high density Development at Marsh St, Arncliffe

The Cooks River Valley Association (CRVA) wishes to lodge the strongest possible objection to the Development Application DA-2017/179 which proposes to locate an 18 hole golf course, a club house and a golf driving range on public land on and around Barton Park/Riverine Park, Banksia, NSW. The proposal needs to be more fully assessed in terms of its environmental, social and heritage implications. The CRVA's objection is supported by the following:

1. Alienation of public open space. The approval of this DA would involve the alienation of more than 50 hectares of public open green space to the exclusive use of a private golf course for up to 99 years. The proposed golf course would be completely fenced off and not allow access to the general public. The Council and government need to appreciate that the retention of public open green space in this rapidly growing City is absolutely fundamental to a viable and liveable city.

Approval of this proposal will effectively privatise significant public open space. There is a strong need for closer analysis of the implications of the loss of this parkland to residents and the wider community. If any development proceeds it should provide a real opportunity to integrate, enhance and increase recreational space for the residents of the southern suburbs, the inner west and beyond and keep public land in public hands.

2. Impact on critical wetlands, riparian zones, biodiversity and river health. Rockdale Council's own website claims that wetlands provide vital habitat platforms for plants and wildlife. Wetlands serve as breeding/nursery environments for birds, fish and invertebrates. They protect land from flooding, recharge groundwater tables and improve water quality by removing unwanted nutrients and sediments. The majority of this area was originally wetlands that have been extensively cleared and filled over the years as development encroached.

The remaining wetlands are vital to the environmental health of the area. The Landing Lights wetlands, the Eve Street wetlands and the Spring Street wetlands are critical components of the wetland system of the Cooks River and are considered as internationally significant, particularly in terms of their use by a number of endangered migratory birds. These wetlands need rehabilitation not removal.

The Landing Lights wetlands is one of the area's most environmentally significant natural resources. The site includes some of the last remaining saline wetlands on the Cooks River and contains vegetation identified as threatened and protected under NSW legislation.

The Eve St wetlands and the Landing Light wetlands are both migratory wading bird habitats. Many of these migratory birds are protected under the China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement and the Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement. Disturbance of these wetlands could breach international treaties.

The Spring St wetlands are in a degraded condition but their removal is unjustified. This degradation has come about because of neglect by Rockdale City Council over many years. The wetlands are an important extension of the Landing Lights wetlands and are well located for restoration. These wetlands should be remediated and integrated into an enhanced wetland system, particularly in view of the historical loss of wetlands in the area.

The wetlands in question should not be placed under the control of a golf club, whose main interest will be maintaining the assets of the golf course. The use of pesticides and fertilizers, machinery, golf carts and high human presence will have a detrimental effect on the wetlands, the migratory birds and the general biodiversity. The transfer of these wetlands into private hands will have drastic ecological implications, turning the wetlands into ponds. The wetlands need to be carefully maintained by a conservation trustee that can fully advocate for their protection and ongoing care.

The large areas of phragmites vegetation also provides excellent habitat for a host of native fauna and provides a vital buffer zone for the wetlands.

The Sydney Regional Environmental Plan states in Section (e) Regulation 10 of the Planning Principles for the Cooks Cove development (which includes the relocation of the golf course), that the Cooks Cove project *must (i) make a significant contribution to ecological sustainability and in particular, the establishment of adequate riparian buffers around the significant wetlands including Spring St, Eve St and Landing Lights as well as (ii) establishing adequate vegetated corridors between Cooks River and Muddy Creek and (iii) promote onsite recovery of the Green and Gold Bell Frog.*


Rockdale City Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2007 (p14) states that *future planning decisions should look to the enhancement of the remaining bird habitats within Rockdale, thereby providing surety for the local bird populations for the enjoyment of future generations.* Council should implement its own Strategy.

It appears that the proposal to relocate the golf course to the Riverine/Barton Park site does not meet any of these articulated Principles and represents a serious threat to the environment.

3. Summary: The proposed land swap, which is the central tenant of the Cooks Cove Southern Precinct Plan, is deeply flawed on many levels. The Plan does not benefit the existing wetlands, in fact it reduces them. It also threatens the very functioning of wetlands by removing the vital riparian buffer zone from around the wetlands. The Plan also inappropriately places the ongoing management and protection of the wetlands with the golf course.

The Plan provides absolutely no benefit to the public. It will alienate significant open space public land and place this public land into private hands for 99 years.

The Cooks River Valley association strongly recommends that the Development Application to relocate the Kogarah golf course onto the Barton Park/Riverine park site be declined, **keeping public land in public hands.**



Peter Munro
Secretary
Cooks River Valley Association