

Matter of Fact

JULY 2013

A free monthly community newspaper for Venus Bay, Tarwin Lower and district.

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VENUS BAY - NOT FOR SALE!

Five years after fighting the 2008 SAVE our RESERVES campaign to oppose the South Gippsland Shire's plan to sell a number of Venus Bay's reserves and 'open spaces', the Venus Bay community has rallied once again to let the council know that their latest move to sell around 7 council owned vacant lots is 'not on'.

Never a community to hold back when their local environment is under threat, a particularly well attended community meeting last Sunday was jointly convened by the Tarwin Lower Venus Bay Association, the Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula and the Venus Bay Community Centre. Local representative Councillor Kieran Kennedy was unable to attend due to illness and sent an apology.

The first part of the meeting was attended by several shire officers led by Chris Van Der Ark, Property Officer, who outlined to the meeting the shire's rationale for the proposed sale under the terms of their Strategic Land Review. This was followed by an extensive question and answer session in which residents were also able to make clear their concerns.

Following the departure of the shire officers the meeting moved to a discussion phase to consider the community's future actions.

The overwhelming majority view was that the Venus Bay community oppose the shire's plans outright and request that council adopt the 5 points outlined on the community's 2008 petition which contains 951 signatures.

They are:

- 1. Formally undertake not to sell any of Venus Bay's Public Open Spaces or Road Reserves or any other Council owned land.*
- 2. Undertake a full cultural heritage and environmental assessment of all Public Open Spaces and council reserve land in Venus Bay. This to be done in consultation with the community and in accordance with the relevant Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation. Any costs associated with these assessments to be borne by Council.*

3. Based on the reports and recommendations produced as a result of point 2 above, rezone ALL Public Open Spaces and council reserve land to Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ) or Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ). Further, with regard to any council owned land zoned Business 1 (BIZ) the Venus Bay community is to be consulted in an open and transparent manner as to its use.

4. Set an initial target of 5% Public Open Space for Venus Bay and allocate funds from its annual budgets to acquire this land by a pre-determined date negotiated with the Venus Bay community.

5. Consult the Venus Bay community in an open and transparent manner regarding any proposal to re-develop the existing business area in Jupiter Boulevard.

Colin Suggett, President of the Tarwin Lower Venus Bay Association expresses the exasperation of his community. "We have been through it all before. The Land Review appears to basing its recommendation on how 'useful' the land is to the community. We have documentation resulting from extensive surveys of all the council owned open spaces in Venus Bay carried out in 2007 which includes an audit of indigenous flora and an assessment of some blocks in terms of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage".



"We have less than 2% of the usual 5% open spaces recommended by planning authorities for urban developments. The original 1960's subdivision unfortunately provided for tiny house lots which are having to accommodate increasingly large houses. These remnant spaces under the shire's hammer provide some relief from the increasing urban density Venus Bay is and will experience in the future" Mr. Suggett says.

The Tarwin Lower Venus Bay Association and the Friends of Venus Bay Peninsula intend to put forward a joint submission to Council by the due date of 23rd July and encourage other groups and individuals to do the same.

They will also relaunch their petition. "We have a huge amount of documentation including the results of the community survey 'StratPlan 2005' and the Venus Bay Urban Design Framework (UDF) to support our case. I can't believe we have to go through all this again" Mr Suggett said.

ACT NOW

COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE UNTIL **23 JULY** TO WRITE TO COUNCIL WITH CONCERNS/OPINIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSED LAND SALE

THE ISSUE WILL BE DEBATED BY COUNCILLORS ON
18 SEPTEMBER

So that we have a record of responses, please send a copy to:
PO BOX 786, Venus Bay, 3956
Email: ybcc@bigpond.com

Drop in a hard copy to VBCC 27 Canterbury Road, Venus Bay

A SELECTION OF NOTES AND COMMENTS FROM THE MEETING:

Question. You spoke of 'benefits'. These blocks are small and not suitable for housing. What's the benefit to Venus Bay community?

Answer. I (Chris) can't identify a particular benefit to VB.

Question. Is the money going to be held in a fund to benefit VB?

Chris: It will go into general revenue. I should ask *you*, what do you want?

Comment Doesn't she know? It's well documented.

Comment: More open space, not less.

Comment: A lot of projects are identified. We could nominate any of them.

Chris: Council will decide how proceeds are spent. I have no influence on that.

Ned: My responsibility is community strengthening. The proceeds of sales should strengthen infrastructure.

Comment: people use some of this land when they walk from one place to another. If houses are built this will be stopped. There should be no loss of land. Income from sales should be used to consolidate these paths of choice.

Question: How does council define 'useful to the community'?

Chris. We have done a physical inspection and would relocate wildlife if necessary.

Question. So habitat corridors are not considered a 'community benefit'?

Comment: We picked our block for privacy. We are nature lovers like the ordinary person who chooses to buy in Venus Bay. Animals and kids use the block identified for sale that adjoins ours. No way can you put a house on it without (damage to them).

Comment. Are you aware that Council has a poor record when it comes to fair allocation of community infrastructure and community strengthening in Venus Bay?

Chris. These allocations are not a staff responsibility. I've heard the claim.

Comment. It's not a claim. It's backed by data.

Comment on health benefits...I have a health background. Passive blocks have community health benefits. The vegetation growing on them benefits us all.

Question. Might some not get a planning permit?

Chris. All would get permits.

Comment: The house blocks in Venus Bay are all too small, and the houses built on them are getting bigger. The density of construction is shocking. Sale of small parcels of land will make that worse.

Comment. There are restrictions on having bores close to septic tanks on small blocks.

Comment We live close to a block nominated for sale. Lots stay on the market for a long time. The one next to us has 4-5 wombat holes. A shame to lose that and you wouldn't get much of a price. I'm curious about what short term benefits you have in mind.

Comment. Council land here was sold for \$86k five years ago. It went on the market shortly after for \$126k.

Comment. The block on Juno Rd isn't on your current list but of the website. Is it for sale or not?

Chris. It's still on the list but potentially on hold.

Proportion of public land in VB is low

Question. Are you aware that normally developers are required to set aside 5% but we have less than 2%?

Chris. When VB was subdivided those planning controls weren't in place. They applied after 1986.

Question. Why not protect the little we have?

Who made this decision?

Question. You seem to have had only council staff involved in the decision. Where was the community? How were we represented?

Chris. This meeting today is where you are represented. This is the process. Council initiated the process.

2.7 Comment on a more strategic approach to land sales by Council.

Comment The density is too great. In 10-15 years Venus Bay will be fully developed. Council land needs a strategy in the light of that. Any land sold should be replaced with new council purchases of undeveloped land that improve the interface with and access to the national park.

Chris. Council has a record of buying land to improve services such as the Korumburra Integrated Children's Services facility. More playground equipment is a possibility for you.

Comment. That reflects the views of a lot of people here this morning. Council is unaware of or ignores the views of local people. There's a petition here from 5 years ago when sale of land was proposed by council, with 950 signatures on it, that says, *Don't sell publicly owned land in Venus Bay.*

Comment.. It's odd that the petition and the supporting documents didn't inform this proposal.

Chris: I know the community doesn't want to sell the land.

Question Can you publish the criterion you used for assessment? Your generic values might not apply in this community.

Comment There might be no economic benefit from the sale. How much will be raised?

Comment. Colin Suggett. Explained the research done and campaign run against the sale, by community volunteers, five years ago.

Comment. Janet Carey. Marion Kavanagh has surveyed and identified all the plants found on the peninsula. *Coast Banksia Woodland* found here is classified as threatened. A botanist, Mary Ellis, assessed the ecological value of these publicly owned properties and made strong recommendations about them. We have her report. Community management of them, in partnership with council was proposed in our submission.

Comment.. We have other detailed plans generated by the community. These should be included in any plans about land use in Venus Bay.

The fire brigade planning issue, criterion for council's assessment, and council's general approach to strategic planning in VB which ignores the well documented views of residents

Two members of the CFA attended in uniform, they said that planning for a new fire brigade building in Venus Bay next to the Men's Shed is needed. The Tarwin Lower building has to relocate too. Planning for these matters is poor.

Process

Question.. If we don't want this sale, what can we do?

Chris. There's a formal process required by the Local Government Act. Written submissions must be with council within 28 days of 25 June ie by 23 July.

Comment. Plants, birds, animals and insects have to be the number one issue to take to council in written submissions.

Chris. The issue will be debated by council on Wednesday 18 September. You can come and have your say.

Ned. You don't have to speak to your submission if you don't want to.

Question: How can we put an end to this pressure on our public land? How do we end this process once and for all?

Chris. Ask for that in your written submissions. Use them as your catalyst.

Question. Have you talked to others in this community?

Chris. I spoke to the business association and they had largely the same views as you. They have concerns about the look of the shops area.

Question. If they sell this 8 what's to stop them selling the lot?

Ned. The process must be open. In your submissions list your reasons and ask to speak to council. If you can keep them short well and good. Councillors have to read stacks of papers. Spare them a thought. Three paragraphs is enough if that's all you need to get your points across. *was pleased to attend the meeting (Sunday). I specifically wanted to hear both sides. With councils presentation I felt it was poorly delivered and designed, simply put forward their determined intent. The council reps were merely sent to sell that intent.*

I took it that they expected more support and was not prepared for the level of objections, at time becoming quite impatient, like when she stated, 'If you don't get it, then you don't get it.' What she failed to recognize is that we got it, but didn't agree. Also by her own admission, submitted surveys, studies and information tabled to council by TLVBA group, she stated she was not familiar with it. This suggests that she was ill-prepared and had not fully done her homework on this community's views. At the same time, those in the community who specifically addressed animal welfare and environmental aspects, she appeared not to empathize or understand where they were coming from.

It's clear that they used nothing of previous or current strategic planning re VB in the decision to list VB properties for sale. Did they know and didn't care? Why didn't Kieran insist that our previous work be taken into account?

This makes a nonsense of all the planning with communities they say they do. It makes them look contemptuous of us, the people they are supposed to be serving. It makes them seem arrogant.