

MEDIA RELEASE

TIME FOR WALKER CORP TO COME OUT OF HIDING

8 June 2004

With a fortnight remaining of the 'community consultation' period for the proposed Ralphs Bay canal estate development, the developer has disappeared from view.

Walker Corporation closed its temporary Lauderdale shopfront on 23 May and has not been seen in the area since. The supposed deadline for comment to Walker is 22 June.

Save Ralphs Bay Inc believes Walker Corporation's actions to date demonstrate it is insulting rather than consulting the community. Chair, Bill Edmunds, said the consultation process has made many community members feel disenfranchised and angry. "They believe, and I share the view, that the developer has treated this community with contempt".

"It begs the question, what is Walker Corporation afraid of? Is it possible they closed the shop doors a month ahead of the consultation deadline because representative, Kevin Hunt, and his assistants were being assailed by angry residents asking difficult questions?"

"It concerns Save Ralphs Bay Inc that the developer, at the State Government's directive, embarked on a 'community consultation' process which is characterised by a paucity of information, and misleading statements about community support, bird habitats, environmental consequences and the perceived benefits," Mr Edmunds said.

Communications coordinator, Cassy O'Connor said there is something seriously questionable about a process which allows Walker Corporation to disappear from public view one month before the supposed deadline in contravention of the Environment Minister's request that it provide detailed information and widespread local consultation.

"Walker has actually indulged in very selective consultation. Cocktail parties and soirees with small business owners, socialising with the big end of town, entertaining those from whom they can be assured of getting a positive reaction. Yet they have been unable to attend any of our meetings to address the grassroots community – including the mums and dads who work all week, pick up the kids and head off to sport on Saturdays, relax on Sundays and have little chance of engaging in any meaningful manner with the Kevin Hunts of this world.

"Only a fraction of locals visited the glossy Lauderdale shopfront display and only a fraction of those filled out a form. The design of the form was, to put it politely, unscientific. For these and a dozen other sound, scientific reasons, the survey was invalid and grossly misleading."

Save Ralphs Bay Inc believes Walker should make public all the details of its survey methodology and results for independent, expert verification. The developer could also hold a public meeting at a sensible time with experts available to answer the community's questions.

This might convince us that their 'consultation' wasn't just a PR smoke and mirrors show.

A delegation from Save Ralphs Bay Inc will raise concerns over the three month process among other issues at a meeting with the Minister for Economic Development, Lara Giddings today.

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Two bays, one coast, one threat...

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