

Is the Walker Corporation proposal for Ralphs Bay unlawful? NEWSLETTER No. 5



Save Ralphs Bay Action Group Inc.

ABN 59536279047

WALKER CORP GOES INTO HIDING

One month before the formal end of 'community consultation' for the proposed Ralphs Bay canal estate development, the developer disappeared from view.

Walker Corporation closed its temporary Lauderdale shoptfront on 23 May and has not been seen in the area since. The 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.

It begs the question, what is Walker Corporation afraid of?

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.

Walker has indulged in very selective consultation. It hosts cocktail parties and soirees with small business owners, the "development" end of town and key members of the local and state political establishment. The grassroots community is being ignored.

A fraction of locals visited the glossy 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 will present the results of its own community consultation process to the Environment and Planning Minister Judy Jackson at the end of the consultation period.

Representatives from SRB Inc have already met with Minister Jackson and the Minister for Economic Development Lara Giddings to relay the overwhelming view that Ralphs Bay is not for sale and that the State Government should put conservation and community first.

The Premier, our Franklin MHA, Paul Lennon has not yet made time available for a meeting.

STOP PRESS

The Lennon Government is feeling the pressure over its apparent refusal to uphold its own Coastal Policy in the face of an unprecedented assault on Tasmania's unspoiled coastline.

Jolted into action by sustained public and media pressure – most recently Stateline Tasmania (11/16) and The Mercury over seven pages (13-14/6) - Environment and Planning Minister Judy Jackson announced that a review of the Coastal Policy was imminent. No time frame was set.

Our own investigations and The Mercury have revealed the State Coastal Policy review has been stalled for up to three years. It took three days for the Government Media Unit to confirm this after initially refusing to answer the journalist's inquiries.

Save Ralphs Bay Inc will be working to ensure the review process is open and transparent, taking into account community concerns.

FINAL INFORMATION EVENING HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT THE BAY!!

June 30 Lauderdale Hall @ 7.30pm
The Social Cost of the Walker Plan

Speakers include:

Jim Russell, Lecturer in Environmental Studies
University of Tasmania. Social values and planning

Peter Hay, Reader in Geography and Environmental
Studies University of Tasmania. The nature of place
and community attachment.

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IS THE WALKER CORPORATION PLAN FOR RALPHS BAY UNLAWFUL?

If the Tasmanian Government was serious about upholding its own environmental planning laws, it would have advised Walker that its canal estate development plan contravened a number of sections of the State Coastal Policy. This would have saved the Lauderdale and South Arm peninsula community enormous distress.

The **TASMANIAN STATE COASTAL POLICY 1996** is the key instrument for protecting our unspoiled coastline from inappropriate and excessive development. Identified outcomes include:

- ◆ **(1.1.2) The coastal zone will be managed to protect ecological, geomorphologic and geological coastal features and aquatic environments of conservation value;**

The saltmarshes and wetlands of Ralphs Bay are of high conservation value according to the State of the Derwent Report 2003. The Tasmanian Forest Practices Board 2002 states wetlands are one of the most degraded and threatened habitats in the world.

- ◆ **(1.1.3) Conservation and protection of migratory species and rare, vulnerable and endangered species;**

Ralphs Bay is listed on the Register of the National Estate for its significant value as a wetland ecosystem which supports up to 14 migratory bird species 'protected' under international agreements with Japan and China; and rare, vulnerable and endangered plant and insect species.

- ◆ **(1.1.9) Important coastal wetlands will be identified, protected, repaired and managed so that their full potential for nature conservation and public benefit is realised. Some wetlands will be managed for multiple use, such as recreation and aquaculture, provided conservation values are not compromised;**

Despite its official recognition as a wetland habitat of local, national and international significance, the developer's Tasmanian representative claims the bay is degraded and that it is not a bird habitat. Any degradation of Ralphs Bay is the result of official neglect, and a sad indictment on the State Government's inability to stick to its own Coastal Policy. Ralphs Bay IS a multiple use nature conservation area, enjoyed by bird watchers, school groups, sail boarders and by the local community generally.

- ◆ **(2.1.1) It is acknowledged that there are conservation reserves and other areas within the coastal zone which will not be available for development;**

Ralphs Bay was declared a Coastal Reserve in 1982, and a designated Conservation Area in 1992. The Walker Corporation plan disregards the protective regime put in place to ensure the Ralphs Bay Conservation Area is conserved in perpetuity for future generations.

- ◆ **(2.1.5) Application of precautionary principle to development that may pose serious or irreversible environmental damage;**

If ever there was a case for extreme caution, it is the Walker Corporation proposal. Canal estates in coastal areas interstate have caused irreversible environmental damage including, habitat destruction, the decimation of nearby fisheries, acid-sulphate soil pollution, household runoff pollution and resulting poor water quality. The NSW State Coastal Policy prohibits the construction of canal estates.

- ◆ **(2.4.1) Minimise and, where possible, totally avoid, any impact on environmentally sensitive areas from the expansion of urban and residential areas;**

The Ralphs Bay Village Project is the single largest residential development proposal in Tasmanian planning history. It is not so much 'expansion' that is being proposed, but the wholesale destruction of an environmentally sensitive area.

- ◆ **(2.7.1) All future use and development of public land in the coastal zone will be consistent with this Policy**

The Sunday Tasmanian newspaper conducted a statewide survey which revealed up to 3500 residential lots and 500 holiday units are planned for our coastline. The State Coastal Policy appears to have been the first victim of the land grab. Our spectacular coastline - the common wealth of all Tasmanians - is becoming a playground for the rich.

"...the real problems with coastal development (are) being caused by the Government's lack of action and leadership. There has been no systematic implementation of coastal policy and it's left to poorly framed council planning schemes to do the job."

Bob Graham - leading environmental planner and architect of the State Coastal Policy 1996. *The Mercury* (14/6)