



# **RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL**

## **Minutes**

### **Reserve Trust Meeting**

**Tuesday, 2 December 2008**

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**MINUTES OF THE RESERVE TRUST MEETING OF RICHMOND VALLEY COUNCIL, HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CNR WALKER STREET AND GRAHAM PLACE, CASINO, ON TUESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2008 AT 2.03 P.M.**

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**PRESENT**

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Crs. C.J. Sullivan (Mayor), C.J. Cox, O. Crawford, S.A. George, R.F. Jeffery, D.A. Kinnish, S.E. Morrissey, R.A. Mustow and S.N. Wheatley.

The General Manager, Director Corporate Services, Director Works, Director Environmental Development Services and Senior Environmental Health Officer were also in attendance.

**1 APOLOGIES**

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Nil.

**2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

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Nil.

**3 REPORTS**

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**3.1 FLYING-FOX CAMP MANAGEMENT PLAN - CAMP ADJACENT TO SILVER SANDS HOLIDAY PARK EVANS HEAD**

**Reference:** Environmental Management - Policy; Parks and Reserves - Planning; P70440, P23237, P1001511

**Prepared by:** Senior Environmental Health Officer

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**Background**

A Management Plan for a flying-fox roosting area (or camp) at Evans Head is currently being prepared and is in a draft form ready to go on public exhibition.

In March this year Council engaged flora and fauna consultant Michael Hallinan to prepare a Plan of Management for a "camp" of flying foxes that started roosting in a small area of littoral rainforest (approximately 1.8 hectares) in 2002. The camp is immediately adjacent to the Silver Sands Holiday Park (SSHP).

Developing a Management Plan for the flying-fox camp has been a necessary step in response to concerns raised about its impact on nearby Holiday Park

residents. These impacts include faecal droppings, noise and odours as well as concerns about the potential for the spread of disease.

Development of a Management Plan is also necessary due to the existence of legislation which affords strong protection to flying-fox camps particularly those camps populated by the grey and black headed flying fox. The Silver Sands camp is populated by these two species and this is significant as they are listed as vulnerable under the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

Due to concerns about the sustainability of the grey and black headed flying-foxes and potential for their extinction, the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) (National Parks and Wildlife Service) does not support any attempt to disturb or relocate flying-fox camps and insists that alternative management strategies be pursued.

Development of the plan is also timely as it coincides with the preparation of a “master plan” for the Silver Sands Holiday Park.

Preparation of the plan to a draft stage has involved a significant investigation and assessment process. This has included a review of legislation related to flying-fox camps, an assessment and appraisal of the camp and littoral rainforest in which they roost, stakeholder liaison particularly with SSHP residents, government agency representatives and nearby business operators as well as an investigation of health concerns.

The draft Silver Sands Flying-Fox Management Plan (SSFFMP) prepared by Michael Hallinan in consultation with Council's Environment, Health and Regulatory Section identifies a number of actions for implementation. Actions centre around education and awareness, community involvement, creating buffers between residents and the camp, rehabilitating on-site and alternative site roosting habitats, planning and development controls and stakeholder partnerships.

## **Report**

### ***Issues***

Flying-fox camps that are in close proximity to or immediately adjacent to urban and residential areas usually do have impacts. The camp at the Silver Sands Holiday Park is having impacts on Park residents particularly on four residential sites immediately adjacent to and under trees in which the flying-foxes roost. A number of other residents within about 50 metres of the camp are also impacted. Results of surveys and interviews with residents has identified that droppings are of the greatest concern followed by odour and noise. There are reports of spoiling of cars, caravans, tents and other items due to flying-fox droppings.

Concerns about health impacts and spread of disease from flying-foxes to people have also been raised. Advice from the Northern Rivers Area Health Service suggests that the risk of spread of disease from flying foxes is very low. There are only two recorded incidents in Australia where there has been a direct transmission of disease from flying-foxes to humans, however, both cases

resulted in fatalities. The Health Service states that transmission of disease from flying foxes is via saliva of the bat to the blood stream of humans or other host such as a bite or scratch but that flying foxes are not generally aggressive and may only become problematic if handled.

The core roosting site at Silver Sands is located at the south end of the site adjacent to long-term holiday park residents, the skateboard park and children's playground. This is an issue as it is in an area where visitation is high and often involves children.

The impact on people's amenity needs to be considered however protection of flying-fox camps is also vitally important and is required by legislation. The species roosting at Silver Sands are listed as vulnerable and proposals to relocate camps are not supported by DECC. In addition the practicality of relocating flying-fox camps is difficult and costly and is generally ineffective.

The flying-fox camp at Silver Sands is relatively recent only being used as a roost since 2002. In that time numbers of flying-foxes have increased, however due to the small size of the littoral rainforest the total capacity of the site is limited. Counts have indicated numbers as high as 5,000 but throughout 2008 were generally 1,500.

Of significance is that flying-foxes are roosting at the site on a seasonal basis arriving in late Autumn during the breeding season and in response to an abundance of food in the area. The site is also used as a maternity camp with pregnant females giving birth in Spring. The camp is generally abandoned by the end of the year around November and December. To this extent there are generally no flying-foxes roosting at the site in the peak Christmas and summer holiday period.

It is likely that flying-foxes will continue to roost seasonally at the littoral rainforest for sometime unless an alternative local site is found and preferred.

### ***Legal***

Flying-foxes like other native wildlife in NSW are protected under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 regardless of whether they occur on public or privately owned land.

Both the grey and black headed fly-foxes which are the two species found at the subject site, are listed as vulnerable under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act. and have further protection under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act administered by the Commonwealth Government.

Any proposal to disturb or relocate flying-fox camps requires approval from DECC through a Section 91 application under the Threatened Species Conservation Act. This is a detailed and lengthy process and is not generally supported by DECC. Instead DECC supports the management of flying-fox camps.

In addition under the legislative framework the threatened status of flying-foxes also applies to their roosting habitat on the NSW north coast. Their locally high risk of extinction has led vegetation communities of Littoral and Lowland Rainforests being declared Endangered Ecological Communities.

### ***Policy***

A Master Plan for the Silver Sands Holiday Park is currently being prepared by Consultants “Integrated Site Design.” This Plan will supersede the current Business Operations Plan for the Holiday Park. Actions developed as part of the Flying-fox Management Plan need to be integrated into the Master Plan.

Many actions identified in the draft Flying-Fox Management Plan correlate with strategic needs of the Holiday Park. Upgrade and maintenance of park assets is a recognised need and can be done in consideration of the management of the flying-fox camp. One example is the children's playground which is currently being relocated to a site further away from the camp.

Creation of a buffer particularly for those residents with vans under trees used for roosting or located immediately adjacent to the camp is a high priority action in the draft Flying-Fox Management Plan. This correlates with the need to review the mix and position of accommodation sites.

Additionally a rehabilitation program exists and has been taking place for sometime at the littoral rainforest. This can be further considered in regard to actions for rehabilitation of the rainforest as recommended in the draft Flying-Fox Plan.

### ***Environmental***

There have been significant population declines of the grey and black headed flying-fox in recent years particularly on the NSW north coast. This population decline has flow-on effects impacting on the regeneration and survival of rainforests and eucalypt forests along the east coast of Australia due to the important role flying-fox have in the spread of tree seeds and pollen.

The need to protect and manage camps including forest communities in which they roost is critical to ensure their survival. The main threat to flying-foxes is habitat loss from clearing or modification reducing available food resources and habitat to roost or camp.

Despite the important ecological role flying-fox play they can also be destructive in areas where they do roost increasing the importance to monitor the littoral rainforest at Silver Sands and carrying out rehabilitation works.

### ***Social***

A non-interventionist or do-nothing approach would likely see worsening living, recreational and natural environments. The potential nuisance and health impacts to residents and visitors shouldn't be ignored and needs a pro-active management response.

The environmental value of the littoral rainforest and the flying-foxes have social benefits. A healthy functioning environment is generally recognised as a benefit to a local community and can have tourism benefits.

### ***Consultation***

A survey was conducted of nearby business and recreational clubs, and residents living within 50 metres of the site. The survey aimed to gauge impacts from roosting flying-foxes and the level of awareness and understanding of issues. The people most impacted by the camp were targeted in the survey. Appendix 3 of the draft plan provides of the survey.

Public exhibition of the draft plan enables further community input prior to the plan being finalised.

### ***Economic***

The presence of the flying-foxes will have an economic impact on the Park, both negatively and positively. In the short term the impact can be seen as negative as it will involve the possible relocation costs of mobile homes and loss of sites (possible only in certain periods of the year), however in the long term there may be positive economical impacts through the promotion of the rainforest area and the flying fox community.

### ***Staff***

To date Council's Senior Environmental Health Officer has managed the preparation of the Flying-Fox Management Plan by the consultant Michael Hallinan.

Following the period of public exhibition and adoption by the Trust, the Senior Environmental Health Officer and SSHP Co-ordinator, along with key staff will need to address the implications and adoption of the Plan

### ***Strategic Links***

The Flying-Fox Management Plan will have direct links to the SSHP Business Operations Plan and the SSHP Master Plan.

The recommendations of the adopted Flying-Fox Management Plan will be included in future landscape and revegetation plans in the Park and surrounding Reserve.

### ***Financial Implications***

The Flying Fox Management Plan is funded in the 2008/2009 SSHP budget.

There will be financial implications associated with implementation of the Flying-Fox Management Plan, however a staged process of management through a priority listing of actions will minimise costs.

Over sixty discrete actions have been recommended and are prioritised into a high, medium or low category based on urgency for implementation. Only a small number have been given an estimated cost, however a number of actions can be incorporated as a standard procedure into the current management structure or into relevant Council staff roles at minimal cost and in some cases will simply change the way things are done..

It is anticipated that funding for implementation of actions will come from the operating revenue of the Silver Sands Holiday Park and will be incorporated into the overall Master Plan being developed for the site and future budgets for the Park.

### **Conclusion**

Flying-foxes have set-up roost or camp in a small area of Littoral Rainforest immediately adjoining the Silver Sands Holiday Park.

Concerns have been raised about the impact of the camp on residents of the Holiday Park, particularly those who are in close proximity to the camp as well as the potential negative impacts on visitors and tourists.

Legislation exists for the protection of flying-fox camps in NSW and prohibits their disturbance including attempts to relocate them. Relocation of camps is only considered by authorities in exceptional circumstances and where all other options have been explored. Land managers are instead obliged to investigate and implement strategies and management options to keep flying-foxes on site.

Development of a management plan is a necessary step in order to both protect the health and safety of residents, other park users and tourists and visitors to the area as well as protect flying-fox camps as required under legislation.

The draft plan prepared by Flora and Fauna Consultant, Michael Hallinan, in consultation with Council's Environment, Health and Regulatory Control Section has involved a significant amount of research and investigation to date. It is a comprehensive document which addresses legislative requirements, health and nuisance impacts from flying-fox camps as well as ecological and environmental values of flying-foxes. Development of the draft plan also involved liaison with people most affected by the camp and with government agency representatives.

The draft plan provides a list of over sixty actions recommended for implementation on a staged process dependent on each actions priority.

The draft plan, a copy of which has been circulated separately to each Councillor, is ready for public exhibition in accordance with the recommendation below.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommended that the Draft Flying-Fox Camp Management Plan, Evans Head, be placed on public exhibition for a period of forty two (42) days from 10 December 2008 until the 21 January 2009 in accordance with Council's requirements.

**RT021208/ 1 RESOLVED** (Cr. Cox/Cr. Jeffery)

That the above recommendation be adopted.

FOR VOTE - All Council members voted unanimously.

**3.2 SUMMARY OF THE CORAKI PUBLIC RECREATION RESERVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2008**

**Reference:** Parks and Reserves - Design and Construction, Service Provision, Trusts; Laws and Enforcement - Standards; P42846

**Prepared by:** Director Corporate Services

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**Background**

The Coraki Public Recreation Reserve Board met on Monday, 10 November 2008.

The Board has the function of care, control and management of Coraki Caravan Park and to provide input to the Reserve Trust in respect of the Caravan Park and other Public Recreation Reserves in Coraki.

**Report*****Issues***

The Coraki Public Recreation Reserve Board considered the following matters at its meeting held on 10 November 2008:

- Plans and development application for a unisex public toilet.
- Matters of a maintenance nature.
- Fencing of an area of the Park to define this area as "enclosed land" to enable better regulation by police of anti-social behaviour.
- Implementation of an alcohol free zone from the boat ramp to the bridge and Council staff to define the area of the Caravan Park and assess necessary signage to allow consideration for residents and patrons to consume alcohol.

A copy of the Minutes of the Coraki Public Recreation Reserve Board Meeting held on 10 November 2008 had been circulated separately to each Councillor.

**Conclusion**

Consideration of the recommendations by the Trust will satisfy the Trust's obligations.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommended that:

1. the information be received and noted.
2. Council implement an alcohol free zone from the boat ramp to the bridge and that defining of the area of the Caravan Park and assessment of necessary signage to allow consideration for residents and patrons to consume alcohol be undertaken via Council staff.

**RT021208/ 2 RESOLVED** (Cr. Wheatley/Cr. Morrissey)

That the above recommendation be adopted.

FOR VOTE - All Council members voted unanimously.

The Meeting closed at 2.11 p.m.

**CONFIRMED - 16 December 2008**

**CHAIRMAN**