

[21 Aug 2006]

Open Letter to the Councillors of Newcastle City Council.

Dear Councillors,

Parks and Playgrounds Movement is outraged that Council last week neglected to give weight to the public issues of heritage impact, presentation and public access regarding Nobbys Headland.

Councillors could have considered the impact of proposed development on the unique heritage listed Nobbys Lighthouse and on public access to Nobbys Headland and Macquarie Pier.

Macquarie Pier is Newcastle's most popular promenade and access to the headland is essential. Access was only denied recently when the gate was erected. Glen Oakley Port Corp head at the time claimed that it was needed to stop skateboarders. Access and heritage impact are the overriding public issues that have not been considered but must ultimately be implemented through the soon to be prepared Conservation Management & Tourism Plan for Coal River Precinct. (The plan should have preceded the development!)

No other lighthouse on the coast has been subjected to adaptive reuse that denies the existence of the Lighthouse as a public heritage feature. Nobbys Lighthouse is unique and probably the oldest existing.

Nobbys Island (Whybaygamba) is home of the giant Kangaroo and the Aboriginal earthquake story. Nobbys was connected to the mainland by the convict built breakwater commenced in 1818. The headland was halved in height on the advice of a Select Committee of the Legislative Council as a base for the Lighthouse which was brought into operation in 1856. The Lighthouse replaced the coal fired beacon that had burnt since the early days of settlement.

Parks and Playgrounds Movement have adopted the recommendations of the Nobbys Lighthouse Protection Committee which require the development to be reviewed and alternatives considered under the provisions of the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Given that the City Council is not a consent Authority in respect of this development we trust that Council will support the Movement in having open public access to the headland and the unique Nobbys Lighthouse featured clear and free in any future development.

Yours Sincerely,

Doug Lithgow, Freeman of the City of Newcastle  
Parks and Playgrounds Movement