

September 21, 1998

Mr. Angus Dawson  
General Manager  
Honeysuckle Development Corp.  
Level 2 251 Wharf Rd  
Newcastle 2300

Dear Angus,

### Our Visit to Honeysuckle

Parks and Playgrounds Movement was pleased to meet you and Evelyn King last Tuesday. We appreciated being given a rundown on the corporation's revised thinking regarding the future development of the Honeysuckle project. We liked the new logo which replaces the old stylised Lonicera, an exotic that had been wrongly chosen. Honeysuckle Point was actually named after the Australian Coastal Honeysuckle (*Banksia serrata*) that grew in the area.

The Movement is critical of some of the recent developments at Honeysuckle and we requested that the Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning prepare a Regional Environmental Plan for the development area along the lines of the City West REP in Sydney. We are disappointed at the Newcastle Council not allowing for openspace zonings in their Local Environmental plan and in not including the Movement in the public participation.

Parks and Playgrounds Movement had requested that the public domain provisions of the LEP include statutory zoning to protect the foreshore recreation and parkland proposed by the plan.

The original Masterplan unveiled by the Greiner Government in 1991 proposed an imaginative and generous array of plazas and open spaces along the waterfront. These were not reflected in the Council's draft LEP. (Copy of Minister Peacocke's 1991 Honeysuckle Concept Masterplan enclosed)

Our chief objection to the Peacocke Masterplan however was that it had been predicated on cutting the railway to the Historic Newcastle Railway Station. This part of the plan was bitterly opposed by the majority of Newcastle people.

In this day and age environmental considerations demand that greater use must be made of the rail infrastructure by retaining and improving passenger rail services. The rail corridor has maintained an open axis to the harbour waterfront up until now and also provides an essential visual unit with movement and activity. It provides the most interesting entrance to the city of Newcastle and its harbour.

We believe that future planning strategies for the revitalisation must include the greater use of the passenger rail system for commuters and tourists and a use of railway stations as nodal points for development to give greater strength and sustainability to the Region's urban structure.

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There was a push by planners to remove the railway from the city fifty years ago when trains were coal fired and smoky. The rapid spread of private motoring after WWII gave mobility to the majority but extended the edges of the city and debilitated our central commercial area.

In early Newcastle the trains brought goods to the marshalling yards at Newcastle East and Civic and coal to the Zarra Street Power Station. These goods services are now gone and the next generation of railway trains will be for passengers and tourists and be faster, quieter and more comfortable connecting historic Newcastle directly with the Hunter hinterland and the Central Coast and Sydney.

Parks and Playgrounds Movement wants the highly successful harbour foreshore landscape and promenade which evolved from the Urban Design and Landscape Competition in 1981 to be continued through the Honeysuckle development to Wickham.

Furthermore we appreciate that the drafted plans for Honeysuckle are based on the registered Deposited Plan that shows the property boundary at the waterfront along the fender line and over the water but we are disappointed at the failure of Honeysuckle to produce plans that show clearly the bulkhead line or the high water mark so that there can be a realistic estimate of the location of the shoreline and the area of the proposed foreshore parks.

Wharf Road was closed this year and all traffic redirected between the heritage buildings to allow for the ill conceived Flinders Cove proposal. The Cove was impractical and had little support in the community. Its removal from the revised strategy will now allow Wharf Rd to be reopened and continue through the area on a sensible alignment. This should be completed as soon as possible.

This improved alignment could allow the heritage area to be more pedestrian friendly and provide extra space for the integration of good sympathetic development. We don't want a mausoleum like heritage area.

The railway workshops were filled with creative activity for more than a hundred years and are now deserted and bare. Beautifully restored workshops without context and devoid of life are anathema to revitalisation.

Ultimately the foreshore must be given over to the people and maritime activities, the railway become the principal people-mover and the heritage workshop buildings be filled with activity reflecting an honesty related to their working past.

A modest practical honesty is desperately needed for the Honeysuckle of the future.

Many thanks for your presentation.

Yours Sincerely,

Doug Lithgow  
Parks and Playgrounds Movement

Enclosure -freehand copy

1991 Masterplan  
proposal for reduced Cove  
Letter to Bryce Gaudry MP