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Tuesday, 3 May 2005

Mr Geoff Douglass
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Dear Geoff,

Notice of Nobbys Development Application 05/0468

**Development Contrary to the Objectives of Newcastle Port Corporation EOI for Nobbys.
Buildings for luxury units, a manager's residence & a restaurant & takeaway food outlet
that will impact on Heritage Listed Signal Station & headland. (S.H.R. No. 01674)**

This DA proposal was brought to the attention of the Parks and Playgrounds Movement by your letter of the 18th of April 2005. Your action is appreciated, however we do acknowledge that the NSW Heritage Office is the consent authority for this DA. and we request that the DA and submissions be forwarded to the Heritage Office for determination.

The Movement discussed the proposals at its last monthly meeting and resolved to lodge an objection to the DA because the proposals are clearly contrary to the stated objectives of the Newcastle Port Corporation's Call for Expressions of Interest for the adaptive reuse of the Nobbys Signal Station and Cottages (May 2003). The Movement reserves the right to take further action.

The DA proposal has ignored the objectives as stated in the Port Corporation's expressions of interest document.

- 1. To release this (currently) restricted site for public access/use and, in doing so, to establish a pre-eminent destination of historic and scenic significance for the benefit of the Newcastle community;*
- 2. To solicit innovative, practical and economic proposals for the adaptive re-use of the signal station and cottages;*
- 3. To protect and enhance the site's historic, aesthetic and social fabric for the future benefit of the Newcastle community;*
- 4. To actively promote the site's heritage value and significance, particularly its role in the development of the Port of Newcastle, through public education and the use of on-site static and interactive information displays.*
- 5. To ensure the safety of all users of the site.*

The intention of the Port Corporation is clearly stated to seek expressions of interest for *adaptive reuse of the Signal Station and Cottages*. Demolition and construction of new buildings on this site were not envisaged in the EOI document. The construction of a restaurant building across the northern aspect of the headland with only the lantern housing of Nobbys light peeping over the top of the building is not satisfactory given the sensitive nature of the site and the need to protect the integrity of the lighthouse heritage structure and reveal the light for the general public. The only practical and acceptable development for the summit is for adaptive reuse of the existing cottages and provision for unfettered public access with within the 1890s perimeter wall.

The Nobbys Lighthouse is the single most important structure on Nobbys. The headland was reduced to its present height for the establishment of the lighthouse, which replaced the original coal-fired beacon on Flagstaff Hill. That beacon was fuelled from coal mined at Colliers Point beneath the present day fort Scratchley by convict miners and was probably the first navigational light on the coast of Australia.

Newcastle's Coal River Precinct, which includes the first coalmines, Flagstaff Hill and Nobbys, is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register No. 01674 and is the most significant heritage and recreational precinct in Australia.

The existing buildings at Nobbys form a clustered and homogeneous group within a defined perimeter wall and any intervention or modification of this significant site should be minimal and reversible. (Port Corp plan of management) It is disappointing that the DA under investigation is neither minimal nor reversible.

Newcastle Port Corporation's key responsibilities are *to provide marine safety, navigation and traffic management services for commercial shipping; and to meet all statutory requirements; be environmentally responsible and provide benefits to the community.* (Port Corp Business Plan)

The protection and careful management of this most valued and distinctive part of the Newcastle landscape is clearly a key responsibility of the Corporation.

We believe that the current DA cannot be accepted as it does not conform to the Corporation's Call for Expressions of Interest nor does it fall within the key responsibilities of the Corporation as published. The DA 05/0468 must be left in abeyance until a Conservation Management Plan has been prepared for the Coal River Precinct, which includes Nobbys headland, as an integral and essential element. The concept of adaptive reuse can then be readvertised and only proposals that can comply with identified objectives and the plan details should be considered.

Further reasons why the current DA is unsatisfactory for the summit of the Nobbys headland are:

- The DA is inappropriate given the site's important Aboriginal, convict and colonial heritage status and the social and landscape value of the site to the people of Newcastle.

- The impact of the proposed development on the heritage-listed Nobbys lighthouse.
- The DA is incompatible with the Openspace Zoning, the City Council's Heritage Places Strategic Plan and Plans of Management 01/6/00 and the Hunter REP Heritage listing.
- The development dominates Nobbys for private benefit with limited access by the public.
- The DA would make Nobbys an exclusive private space rather than a unique public space.
- There is no adaptive reuse to improve heritage values for the benefit of the public.
- The DA would impact on the adjacent Macquarie Pier with private vehicular traffic.
- The DA interpretation strategy is ephemeral and is not an integral aspect of the proposal.
- The interpretation as documented is largely only accessible to paying patrons.
- Hazards and access by private vehicles are not adequately considered.
- Geo-technical and archaeological examinations are needed and have not been undertaken.
- The Conservation Management Plan for the Coal River Precinct must inform the future development of Nobbys, which is an essential part of the Precinct.

Parks and Playgrounds Movement thanks Council for the opportunity to comment on the DA and we trust that Newcastle's most valued landscape will ultimately be given the recognition and heritage interpretation it deserves for the enjoyment of the whole community.

Yours faithfully

Doug Lithgow Freeman of the City of Newcastle
Parks and Playgrounds Movement
<http://www.geocities.com/parksandplaygrounds/>