

Transcript of 2NR radio interview on 20th July 1994 with Gabrielle Kibble, Director General of Ministry of Housing, Planning and Urban Development, and Diana Roberts, Lismore City Council Councilor, regarding the Department of Housing's withdrawal of its development application to Lismore Council for a 5 dwelling Multiple Occupancy at Stoney Chute Rd. Nimbin.

Gabrielle Kibble : We are concerned that there have been a number of issues raised locally of concern about this application, about the appropriateness of this particular site and of this form of accommodation.

2NR : Where did these concerns come from ?

G.K.: They came from various local sources, including the comments that were made by the mayor and reported in the Northern Star.

2NR : Does that mean that the Department is effectively running scared ?

G.K.: No, the Department is not running scared, and I would like to make it absolutely clear that the department has not withdrawn the grant. It is merely saying that it thinks that we should listen to the local concerns, go back to the drawing board, consult with the local community and come up with a revised proposal.

2NR : Does that mean that you didn't get it right in the first place ? That the consultation process wasn't undertaken ?

G.K.: I don't know that I can make a comment on that. I can merely say that I think it is appropriate that we listen to local concerns that have been raised. In this case, a number of concerns have been raised about this proposal as to whether it is value for money, whether it is the most appropriate form of accommodation on the most appropriate site for unemployed youth. I took the decision that we should go back to the drawing board and speak to a range of local people, including the Council, and see whether there is a better way of meeting the accommodation need.

2NR : Diana Roberts is a Councilor on the Lismore City Council, and is a little bit upset at what happened with the withdrawal of this development.

Diana Roberts : Yes, I was, in that we weren't given any reasons, and in the way in which the message was delivered to Councilors and the community was inappropriate. But it is gratifying to hear that the grant isn't actually going to be withdrawn.

There are two issues raised by Gabrielle Kibble, one is to do with the appropriateness of the proposal, and the other is to do with the suitability of the site. The suitability of the site should have been looked at through the planning process, which should have been followed.

The appropriateness of the proposal is another issue altogether, and I think there is an enormous amount of support in the community for the proposal. A lot of the opposition that has arisen is because of the site that has been selected. It is an issue that needs to be addressed, but it is also important to recognise that there has been more support in the community for the proposal than there has been opposition.

2NR : Is that support for the principles of the proposal, that is, a Multiple Occupancy (M.O.) for homeless youth, rather than the details of where it was going to be ?

D.R.: Yes, I think the support has been for the provision of co-operative housing for young people in the Nimbin area. When the proposal was initially submitted to the Department it was widely supported, not only by service providers in Lismore, but by service providers in Nimbin and members of the Nimbin community.

The proposal has become complicated because the planning instrument that allows it to proceed is Multiple Occupancy, and there is currently a debate raging in the community about the appropriateness, or otherwise, of M.O. It is unfortunate that this proposal has got tied up in that debate, which is really another debate altogether.

2NR : In a way they are tied together. You are talking about a situation where you're getting a number of young people, who may need to live together, having what would effectively be a M.O.. At the same time it's an experimental form of development, isn't it ?

D.R.: That's true. You are bringing young people together to live co-operatively in a rural setting. The planning instrument that currently allows this to happen is M.O. If the Department is prepared to consider something like Community Title, and that's more acceptable to the community, then so be it. But that will make it a more expensive development.

2NR : Is your concern that there is effectively a move to experimental development, especially for young people, and that there is an 'in principle' opposition to this development, rather than the specifics, from some quarters of the Lismore/Nimbin area ?

D.R.: Defiantly. As Councilors we haven't actually been

informed of the nature of the opposition, or the degree of support. We haven't been informed officially about the details of the proposal and I think that we should, at least, have been given that opportunity. The Department have made their decision based on hearsay and what's been on the media, which hasn't really demonstrated the large amount of support for the project.

The notice of motion that was put up by the mayor, I would say is actually ill informed in some ways, as the comments aren't accurate and don't reflect the actual situation. I think it's political pressure that's been brought to bear, and it's a political decision. I really hope that Nimbin doesn't lose this funding, and that we can find some creative solutions for the youth in Nimbin, because there is a desperate need.

2NR : G.K., what about the comment from Diana that she's hoping that the development can go on with the funding, which you've said is not withdrawn ?

G.K.: I was pleased to hear her comment, and you can be assured that the Department will be looking for the most creative solution it can find to this issue, and that will go back with an open mind to discuss what is the best way forward on this particular project.

2NR : Wouldn't you be concerned that there could be 'in principle' opposition coming from some quarters of this community to the sort of innovative development your Department was putting up ?

G.K.: That may be. I think that we will undertake a range of discussions in the community to try and formulate a proposal that has a broad base of community support, and that provides housing for those in need of housing, in an appropriate manner and in an appropriate location.

2NR : So you are foreshadowing a bit of community consultation ?

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