

rather than appealing the  
DA to the court the whole  
community moved interstate

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FREE

VOL. 3

North Coast

# ISSUES

FEB. '91

No.2

Over 20,000 readers throughout Ballina Shire, Byron Bay & Lismore

## MODEL M.O. FOR MEERSCHAUM VALE

By DANNY MORTISON

Applicants for a Multiple Occupancy development at Meerschaum Vale chose the M.O. In preference to freehold development to preserve the integrity of the land.

A meeting of local residents at Meerschaum Vale Hall on the evening of January 15 heard the applicants, led by Solicitor, Quentin Proctor, and Planning Consultant, Stephen Connolly of Planners North, speak about the aims and objectives of the people behind the application.

Unlike many other M.O. applications the packed hall was told the majority of people involved in the planned community were professional people whose main aim was the conservation and regeneration of the 97 hectare site using the permaculture techniques expounded by Bill Mollison.

Mr Connolly told the meeting the M.O. application was within the guidelines of the N.S.W. Environmental Planning Policy.

"I hope Ballina Shire Council will permit this project which would maintain the integrity of the land and environment with little or no impact. The only alternative for this land would be a freehold subdivision which would probably ensure severe degradation of the site.

"Further the applicants for this will ask for a covenant to be put on the land to ensure there will be no future sub division, therefore preserving the integrity of the site in perpetuity.

"My clients are not hippy dippies,

they are straight forward people; solicitors, medical practitioners Clerks of Court and public servants. They are seeking to establish a community that lives in harmony with the environment; a model of sustainable development."

Mr Proctor introduced himself as a recent resident of the area. He had lived behind the Gold Coast for some 20 years.

All of the people involved are members of "All One Voice" an organisation which conducts seminars and workshops on the environment.

"A number of people within this group decided they wanted to find a place where we could put many of the ideals from these seminars and workshops into practice.

"We don't wish to become some elitist or exclusive group. We have modelled the community facility on successful overseas co-operative housing groups such as in Denmark which are similar to Townhouse set ups in Ballina.

"We are definitely not a religious or political group, nor do we have affiliations with such. We believe we represent the wider community of people who are concerned about the decline in international energy resources."

Mr Proctor said an O.K. from Ballina Shire Council on a Multiple

Occupancy development would not mean the land would be immediately sold.

"In fact the site would never be a commercial proposition."

Mr Proctor explained to the meeting the plan was to erect 12 energy and cost efficient dwellings which would be architect designed.

The major concerns of people at the meeting were the impact on creek water with which the new occupants would water gardens and newly planted forest trees.

All drinking water would be drawn from rainwater tanks.

Opposition came from cattle farmers who required water for stock on grazing land below the planned development.

Stephen Connolly told those concerned that any water planned to be taken from the creek would be under the guidance of the Water Resources Commission.

One interjector scoffed at the idea, saying he had previous dealings with the commission and "got nowhere".

Mr Connolly said any land holders who were inconvenienced by the inaction of the Commission had the legal right to take the WRC to court.

Other fears from residents included that the Multiple Occupancy would: "turn this village into

Continued page 3

## POLITICAL SUICIDE OVER APEX SHED

Ballina Shire Councillors who opposed a new pavillion at Alstonville Showground may have committed political suicide, according to a spokesman for Alstonville Apex Club.

In fact, in its rejection of the proposal by Apex and Alstonville Agricultural Society to erect the pavilion council has opened a "Pandora's Box" of issues, all of which go to the heart of the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration of the Shire.

A spokesman for Alstonville Apex Club said Council's role in these areas is to lay down the relevant planning instruments or Local Environment Plan (LEP) and then to abide by and enforce the LEP subject to community opinion.

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# SHED ROW - SUICIDE

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Community opinion in this instance comprised a vocal minority of 21 residents versus 2 community groups, the Alstonville Agricultural Society and the Alstonville Apex Club.

"A wet weather venue is urgently required at the Showground, particularly between the months of January and May.

"The Showground is zoned open space 6(a) under the provisions of the Ballina Local Environment Plan, 1987 and the proposed erection and uses of the building are permissible with Council consent."

The Chief Town Planner in his report to Council reported that the additional facilities would provide Alstonville with significantly enhanced opportunities for a range of exhibition, sporting and cultural activities and that, on balance, the disadvantages of the proposal were outweighed by the community benefits.

The spokesman said, however, many objections to the pavilion at Alstonville were not based on community benefit but self interest, hypothetical property values and perceived reduction in the amenity of the area.

"In this instance the objections were thinly veiled and related to the aesthetics of the building, the potential for vandalism and traffic. All of the issues were covered by the Chief Town Planner in his report to Council. Integration to the community centre, landscaping and building set-back.

"One can not escape the fact that the erection of an agricultural pavilion is a legitimate activity in an Agricultural Showground and this must have been known to local residents when they purchased property."

He said the most insidious form of objection came from people not directly affected by the proposal. "These people miss the point entirely, firstly that this is not a government spending program to cater to lobby groups. Secondly, if they required some special type of community facility they themselves should be involved in it's provision rather than expecting the Agricultural Society and Apex to provide it for them."

The spokesman said if the community no longer required the provision of facilities such as Pre-Schools, Community Centres, Safety-house signs etc., then the Apex Association could afford to take a break and step back. "After all there must be more enjoyable ways for young family men to spend their week-ends other than selling raffle tickets, building play-grounds and providing free man-power for charity fetes.

"It is the Alstonville Agricultural Society which is most adversely affected by the Council's refusal of the project. Since 1818 the committee has been striving to fund the Showground facility. That is 102 years of cake stalls, growing potato crops and working bees to maintain and improve the showground only to find this happen."

## MODEL M.O.

From page 1

another Nimbin or Mullumbimby... we don't want that".

Mr Proctor said there was little likelihood of such a scenario given the professional background of most of the people involved in the community.

"Our common goal is tied in with our association with the organisation "All One Voice Incorporated" a N.S.W. organisation dedicated to educate people on the environment, sustainable and ethical business practices, health, relationships and general skills." One of the members of All One Voice is Dr Helen Caldicott who figured prominently in the unseating of Charles Blunt at the lat Federal election.

He said a number of community members would be commencing a health and medical centre in Alstonville and possibly an environmental education centre where seminars could take place informing people on environmentally safe household products, consumer goods, building materials and the like.

Another concern from residents was the number of dwellings permissible.

Mr Connolly said the application to Ballina Shire was for 12 dwellings, architect designed, built from plantation timbers with colourbond roofing. Under State legislation this could later be increased to up to 25, but only with Council approval.

Many at the meeting assumed that this would be the case despite assurances from Mr Proctor that the Trust's intention was

for just 12.

"Even these 12 dwellings, with approval, would not go up immediately. They would be built gradually over, perhaps the next 12 to 24 months, after we got building approvals from Council."

Jeannie Hicks, a neighbour of the site, said she would support the application.

"Multiple Occupancy developments are usually made by people with romantic ideas with little resources to bring these to fruition. The people involved in this application already have a common ideal and have been successful in their professional lives. Any work on the property which could not be done by these people would, most certainly, pave the way for others in the area to be gainfully employed.

"I wouldn't be backing anything which did not have integrity. The people in this project aim to set up a village style concept which would be a model for others using natural energy of solar, wind and water.

"I believe that showing that people can live in harmony with the land and assist regeneration of a property can only do good for the planet. Today it is a reality that resources are becoming more and more scarce and I see the goal of this group as fairly noble."

Mr Proctor confirmed after the meeting the proposed development was based on maintaining and improving the integrity of the land and would most certainly provide an injection of funds to the area with employment opportunities for building and for regeneration projects which would be on-going.



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# SKILLS SHARED AT BALLINA

The variety and success of courses offered by Ballina SkillShare have been applauded by the Member for Page, Mr. Harry Woods.

Mr. Woods said 60 per cent of the 200 people enrolled went on to find employment, indicating a high standard of expertise in the courses offered.

Ballina SkillShare conducted courses in topics ranging from personal care attendants and family day care to studies in the retail industry and of rural skills.

Mr. Woods said 1990 was a year of tremendous success for the SkillShare program.

"The organisation exceeded all its contracted targets and, in this year, gets an extra \$45,000 granted from the Federal Government for three special modules," he said. "Total funding for this year

is \$155,000."

Mr. Woods said community support and recognition for the work of SkillShare was important to the organisation's success.

"The establishment of the project and the improvement of the premises and services being offered to the unemployed deserve

congratulations. Ballina SkillShare has my sincere good wishes for a successful 1991.

"The ability to fulfil its aims will consolidate linkages with other training providers and services and continue to provide the unemployed with skills so valuable in the process of finding employment."

## No Fast Tracking on Bananas

Damage done to banana plantations in Queensland will not lead to any fast-tracking of banana import applications in order to meet possible shortfalls in production during the next six months, the Federal Member for Richmond, Neville Newell has warned.

Mr Newell was commenting on reports from banana growers about the extent of damage to crops in Queensland caused by tropical cyclone Joy.

Mr Newell said that some growers had expressed fear that pressure could be applied on Government to 'fast-track' applications for import licenses in order to take advantage of short-term market needs.

"I sympathise with those whose crops have been devastated by the cyclone, and the personal losses they have sustained.

However, the procedures for treating applications for banana imports have not changed.

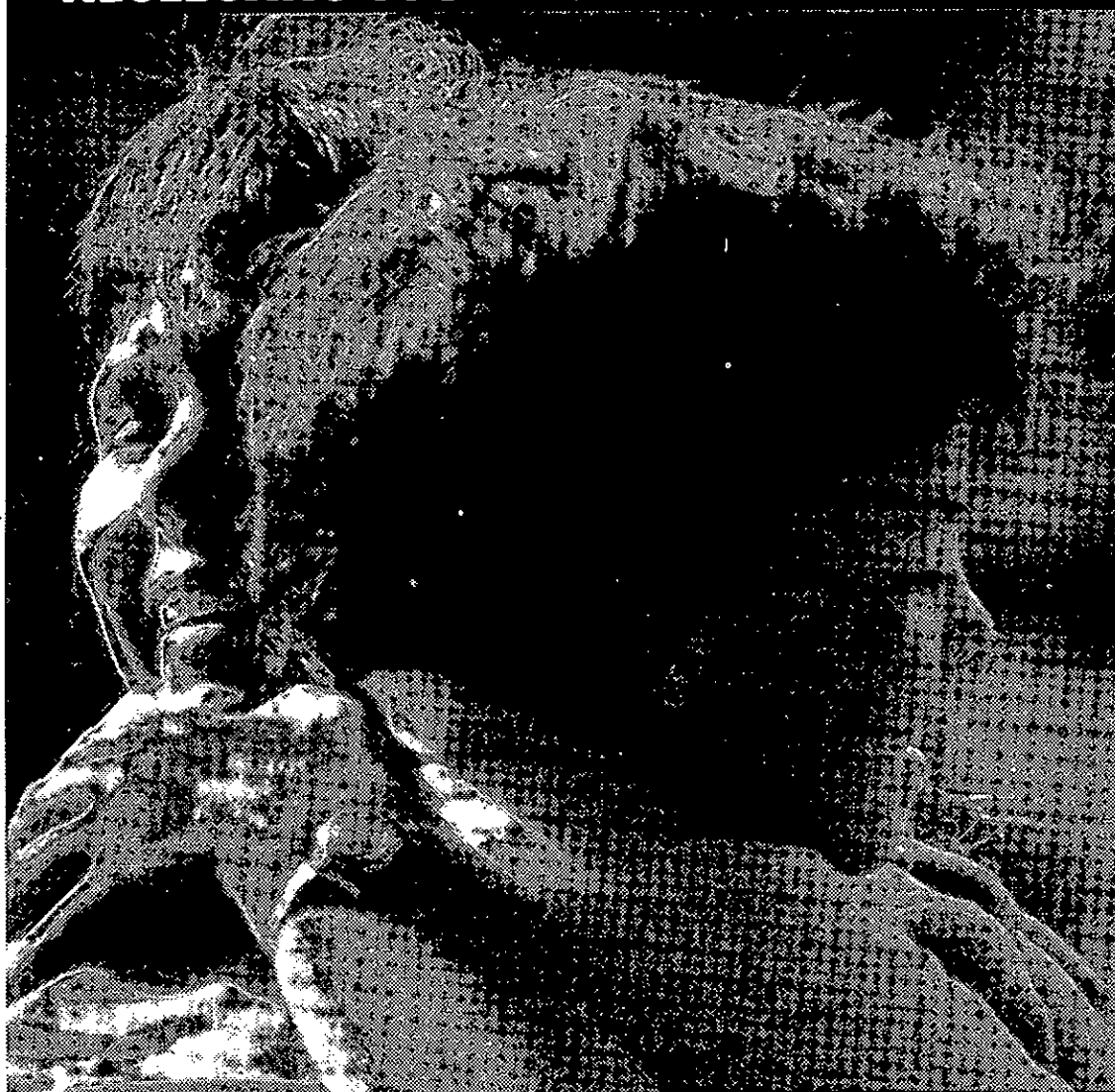
The Minister, John Kerin, has made it abundantly clear over and over again that those procedures will be adhered to.

That being the case, there will be no fast-tracking of applications, if they are lodged."

Mr Newell said he was not aware if any new applications had been made at this stage.

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