

NSW Government
Trade & Investment, Crown Lands
P.O. Box 6
East Maitland NSW 2323
Attn Mr Stewart Veitch
Senior Manager

Port Stephens Holiday Parks Plans of Management

At our meeting on 10 December 2012, our Association was advised that Port Stephens Council, as Crown Land's Trust Managers, had finalised Plans of Management (POM) for the Port Stephens Holiday Parks in isolation and without further consultation with our Association. This was in direct breach of an agreement and undertaking made by your Trust Manager's Commercial Services Manager in our Association's meeting with this officer on 1 December 2011, and reconfirmed with this officer on 20 March 2012.

Crown Lands are now in receipt of the Plans of Management authorised by the Port Stephens Holiday Park Reserve Trust and have invited our Association and Holiday Van owners to comment on the Plans. We thank Crown Lands on fulfilling their commitment made in June 2010 to seek this final input prior to the POM submission to the Minister for final authorisation.

Opposition to the Removal of Holiday Vans

Our Association have maintained its opposition to the removal of Holiday Vans from the Halifax, Shoal Bay & Fingal Bay Holiday Parks detailed in the Plans of Management, since they were first placed on public exhibition in July 2009. Port Stephens Caravan & Campers Association (PSCCA) do not agree that replacing 104 Holiday Vans, and their guaranteed income, with additional tourist sites provides a greater financial return to the Parks. PSCCA and Holiday Van owners have consistently argued that the financial returns of the Parks will be negatively impacted when the guaranteed income from Holiday Vans is removed.

Occupancy Rates

With the exception of the three weeks at Christmas, Easter public holidays and the October long weekend (a total of 28 days), all Port Stephens Holiday Parks have vacancies across the range of accommodation types. The audit commissioned by Crown Lands of the management of the Port Stephens Holiday Parks (Deloitte Report) confirms that occupancy levels at Port Stephens Holiday Parks are, on average, 50-53% which exceeds Crown Lands' average of 44%. This means that there is an average <u>vacancy</u> rate across the Parks of over 45%!

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Port Stephens Council (PSC) have confirmed to our Association that occupancy levels since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis have been below expectation, and the consistent income from Holiday Vans has been a key revenue source for the Parks. This fact is again supported by the Deloitte Report, especially at Fingal Bay as the key source of revenue across the three Parks.

These facts confirm PSCCA's position that there should be no removal of Holiday Vans from the Parks, which will only add to the 45%+ vacancies, and reduce income.

Financial Modelling

PSC officers have informed PSCCA that many of the planned developments included in the draft Plans of Management were no longer economically viable, given the current economic climate and occupancy rates not meeting expectations. These planned developments were based on financial modelling and business cases that pre dated the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, and are no longer valid. Whilst there have been changes in the final POM, including increased removals of Holiday Vans at all Parks, significant developments requiring capital expenditure exceeding \$15million are planned.

It is our belief that the foundation for the financial model of the POM is based on two critical assumptions:

- 1. increased occupancy rates, and
- 2. the capital expenditure is entirely funded from the Crown Trust Reserve funds, with no additional borrowings/loans.

With respect to increased occupancy rates, given the 45%+ vacancy rate across the Parks, PSCCA submit that there is an abundance of underutilised capacity in the Parks across all accommodation types, which would be more than capable of accommodating any increase in any of the Park's usage. Any investment to change individual site's usage to enhance patronage should be spent on the underperforming sites that are unable to be sold right now. Removing 104 Holiday Vans will only add to the number of vacant underutilised sites, and cost over \$500,000 in lost revenue per annum.

With respect to the Crown Reserve Trust funding, the financial plan budgets for only \$3.2million to be spent on Crown Reserves in the greater Port Stephens community over the next six years. This is out of funds in excess of \$23million that are projected to be available from the Holiday Parks. The rest of the funds, over \$20million, are planned to be used on funding developments in the Holiday Parks only. PSCCA submit that this funding allocation is grossly disproportionate in favour of the Holiday Parks, and is dramatically out of step with the expectations of the local community.

Sustainable Plans for the Future

Holiday Van owners support many elements of the proposed Plans of Management, especially the improvements to health, safety and security in the

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Parks. Holiday Van owners also support any improvements which add value to the Parks, including changes to the underperforming tourist sites to ensuite sites, landscaping and revitalizing gardens and grassed areas, and improving services. PSCCA believe that investment in these areas will lead to increased patronage and therefore improved business outcomes, and will require considerably less capital investment.

Improvements such as developing additional sites at Fingal Bay to increase the density, reconfiguring larger drive through tourist sites to cater for increasing numbers of motorhomes, larger caravans and fifth wheeler type vehicles, and services such as better internet access/coverage and access to Foxtel are also proposed.

PSCCA Proposals

At it's meeting in January 2013, Port Stephens Caravan & Campers Association members resolved that the following items are presented to Crown Lands:

- PSCCA dispute that a proper consultation process has occurred with the PSC during the preparation of Plans of Management from 2009 to 2013.
- 2. PSCCA propose:
 - that no public sales of Holiday Vans or changes to Occupancy Agreements are allowed for a twelve month period;
 - that during this period, sales of Holiday Vans on sites unaffected by the Plans of Management may be made to existing Occupancy Agreement holders who occupy a Holiday Van on an affected site;
 - as a partial solution to reduce Holiday Vans in the Parks is a buy back by the Crown Lands Trust of Holiday Vans within the Parks. This process was implemented at Silver Sands Holiday Park at Evans Head and expedited the reduction of Holiday Vans in the Park.

These measures will ensure that all Holiday Van owners are treated equally, fairly, without prejudice or discrimination, and Holiday Van owners on an affected site will have the opportunity to remain in the Parks.

3. PSC have advised the Port Stephens Holiday Park Reserve Trust that they will fund all developments from current funds (in budget) and the Crown Reserve Trust funds. PSCCA contest that this advice is based on a number of assumptions that are not disclosed or documented as a risk to the Plans. Crown Reserve Trust funds balance is \$6.5million at 2012, with current budget expenditure available of \$4.3million (cash and loan funds). This means there are total funds available of \$10.8million to fund repayment of existing debt (over \$3million) and planned capital expenditure of \$15.87million. There is a deficit of over \$8million that needs to be provided from operating profits or loans.

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PSC's financial plan and advice to the Park Reserve Trust is based on an assumption that the majority of Crown Reserve Trust funds of \$6.5million, and ongoing Funds from Operations, are only spent in the Holiday Parks, and not used for enhancements in the wider Port Stephens area Crown Reserves. Only \$1.5million has been identified in 2012/13 for expenditure in other Reserves, \$0.5million in 2013/14 and only \$0.3million in each future year. This equates to only 17% in year one and 10% thereafter, of the Crown Reserve Trust funds are being spent outside the Holiday Parks in the wider community, after year one.

The local community have high expectations that the <u>majority</u> of these Crown Reserve Trust funds will be spent in the community's Reserves. This expectation has also been expressed publically by the Port Stephens Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors.

PSCCA therefore submit that the financial plans for the Holiday Parks are unrealistic and misaligned with PSC's leadership, values and community expectations. The entire financial plan and proposed development capital expenditure in the Parks hinges on 86.5% of the Crown Reserve Trust funds being spent in the three Holiday Parks, leaving only 13.5% to be spent in the wider community over the six years of these Plans of Management.

4. PSCCA therefore do not believe that the POM can be executed in their current form, and still achieve PSC and Crown Land's other commitments and community expectations in the Port Stephens Crown Reserves. The community, and Council leadership, has a clear expectation that the <u>majority</u> of the Crown Reserve Trust funds (\$6.5million at 2012 + ongoing Funds from Operations) shall be spent on enhancements in the wider Port Stephens area Crown Reserves, not just in the three Holiday Parks. PSC as Trust Managers of the Holiday Parks will therefore have to borrow significant State Government funds to execute its Plans of Management with capital expenditure of \$15.87million identified.

All this when the Parks significant capital expenditure in the 2007-2010 period of \$4.82million has exceeded the Park's income by \$0.7million over this period. How can this proposed additional new expenditure of \$15.87million, on top of existing borrowings, be fiscally responsible, and a proper use of community and taxpayers money? This capital expenditure will be an increase in the Parks' assets of Property, Plant and Equipment from \$10.9million in 2010 to approximately \$25million, leveraged off significant State Government debt.

5. PSCCA has reviewed the developments and capital expenditure proposed. It is the opinion of the PSCCA that the investment level is excessive and the projected returns do not align with the PSC obligations to Crown Lands as the Trustee Manager of the holiday parks. The level of transparency with the community and the Reserve Trust, given lack of disclosure of key financial

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assumptions, is not acceptable for a government organisation and is not aligned with community expectations.

- 6. PSCCA note from PSC's budget estimates for the Parks, that overall Expenses from Continuing Operations remains static, or increases depending on the Park, over the period of these Plans of Management. From our initial review there does not appear to be a reduction in expenditure over time, which would be consistent with improved management or operational processes, or reduced costs associated with lower maintenance due to the newly installed capital improvements. It is also of significant concern and note that Employee Benefits and On-costs show budgeted increases of 44%, 62% and 72% from years 2011-12 to 2012-13 in the Parks, and continue to rise over the POM budget periods
- 7. History demonstrates that previous Business Plans have been overly ambitious and unachievable. Nearly half of the 2004/5 Master Plans developments remain incomplete after 8 years. This history demands PSC and Crown Lands develop realistic financial and business management plans, ensuring appropriate governance of this multi million dollar commercial enterprise. The level of development and change is excessive and extremely capital intensive, which is aimed at increasing occupancy and income for the Parks. However occupancy levels at the Parks are at 50-53%, which are already above the Crown Lands average of 44%. (Deloitte Report). This challenges whether capital expenditure of this magnitude is warranted, given the higher than average occupancy already being experienced this may indicate that any increased occupancy assumptions and expectations may be overly optimistic.
- 8. PSCCA believe that the Holiday Parks are not competing fairly with local business and other investors in holiday accommodation in the vicinity of the Holiday Parks. Competitors in this tight, competitive tourist accommodation market do not have access to low interest State Government funds, thereby providing the Holiday Parks an unfair advantage. PSCCA is of the opinion that holiday parks should be affordable for the greater tourist population with pricing of accommodation types not driven higher due to servicing inappropriate debt.

Park Specific Proposed Amendments

- 9. Shoal Bay PSCCA propose that any additional new eastern exit point at Shoal Bay is located adjacent to the Office complex at Kingfish Avenue. PSCCA oppose the development of a new exit at its current proposed eastern location on the basis that safety, security and the environment have not been fully considered. (See attached site map).
- 10. Shoal Bay PSCCA propose that all Holiday Vans on the western boundary are retained, and the proposed tourist ensuite facilities are installed on the

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underperforming sites in Angelfish Drive or on the Crown Land area bordered by Marlin & Luderick. (See attached site map).

- 11. Shoal Bay PSCCA oppose the extension of the recreation area and construction of a water playground/swimming pool at the expense of six (6) tourist sites in prime location adjacent to the amenities. Total cost of this development is a proposed capital cost of \$380,000 and loss of revenue of up to \$37,000 per annum from the tourist sites.
- 12. Fingal Bay PSCCA propose that the vacant site in Kalvan Street, currently split between 2 adjacent holiday vans for additional parking, be allocated as a Holiday Van site.
- 13. Fingal Bay PSCCA propose increasing density in the Park by reconfiguring larger sites, creating additional new sites to accommodate displaced holiday vans. This development should be included in Phase 2, which would allow for relocation of affected Holiday Vans. This is an essential pre-cursor to conversion of holiday van sites to ensuite tourist and cabins in Phase 2 and Phase 3. This work of reconfiguring sites is noted in the Plan of Management to be investigated, but no timing has been allocated.
- 14. Fingal Bay PSCCA propose expanding Fingal Bay Holiday Park by relocating the boundary fences on Crown Land. Additional land is available at the southern and northern boundaries of the park.
 - PSCCA propose that the northern boundary is relocated to accommodate the proposed expansion of the tent camping precinct, removing the requirement to affect the adjacent Holiday Vans, and
 - PSCCA propose that the southern boundary is relocated to accommodate the proposed expansion of the cabin precinct, removing the requirement to affect the adjacent Holiday Vans.
- 15. Fingal Bay PSCCA propose the relocation of the front gate and office to the western side (back) of the Holiday Park so that the best real estate at the eastern (beach) end of the Park can be used for cabins.
- 16. Fingal Bay PSCCA propose an entry at the tennis court car park can be utilized for the garbage facility entrance, with very little effect on sites.
- 17. Halifax Park PSCCA propose moving the timing of the planned development of converting five tourist sites to establish new Holiday Van sites to Phase 2 instead of Phase 6. This will enable affected Holiday Vans to ballot to relocate to these new Holiday Van sites. Leaving this development in Phase 6 will be too late for affected Holiday Vans as they will have already been removed from site.

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- 18. Halifax Park PSCCA propose that tent camping is retained in the existing location at Halifax Holiday Park. Halifax occupancy rates are greater than 60%, much higher than LPMA average of 44%. Part of this impressive occupancy is the availability of tent camping at Halifax.
- 19. Halifax Park PSCCA oppose the inclusion of Lot 424 within Halifax Park. This open space community Reserve is a community asset and frequently used. Inclusion of this Lot 424 and development into the Holiday Park is not consistent with community expectations and are not consistent with the Sections 10 and 11 of the Crown Lands Act 1989.
- 20. Halifax Park PSCCA oppose the extension of the recreation area and construction of a water playground/swimming pool at the expense of fifteen sites in prime location adjacent to the amenities. Total cost of this development is a proposed capital cost of \$600,000 for the recreation area and \$450,000 for the water playground / swimming pool and loss of revenue of up to \$115,000 per annum from the lost sites.

PSCCA believe that these proposals are a sensible, practical approach that all stakeholders can support, and will achieve Plans of Management that are realistic, financially viable and will deliver the required outcomes for the Holiday Parks.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal and look forward to discussing the content with you in the near future.

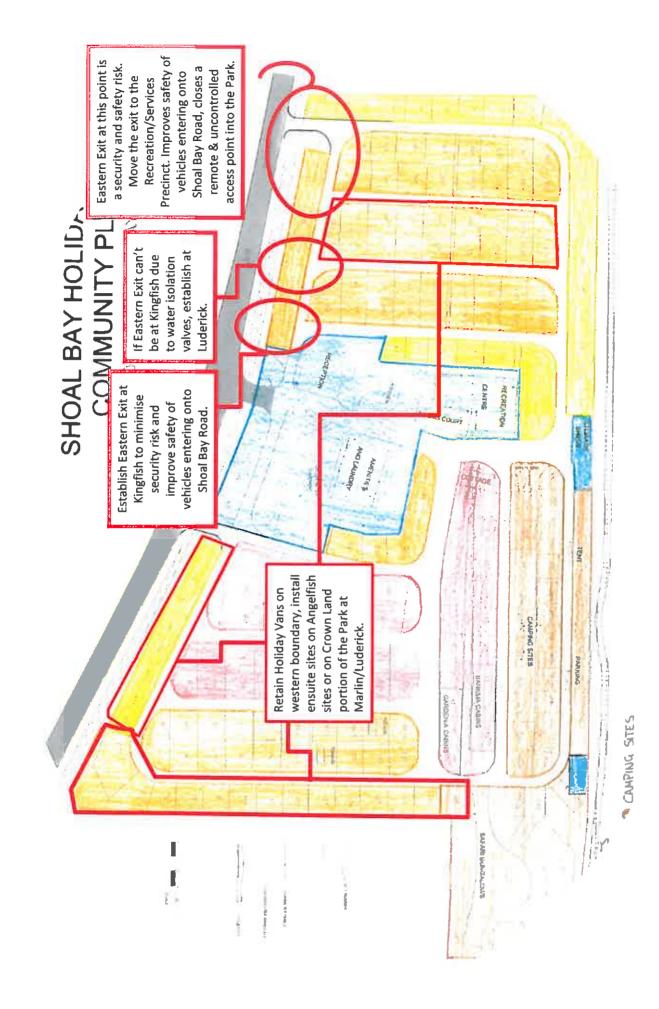
Yours sincerely,

Graeme Ray President

M 0418 653818

Harvey Bennett Secretary

M 0439 072244



MOTIONS TO GO BACK TO PSC & CROWN LANDS AFTER DISCUSSION AT THE PSCCA MEETING 27 JAN 2013

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SUPPORT SIGNITURE SHEET

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