

We The People
Program 210 July 4, 2016

We the People The Great Land Grab



Good day to you. I believe most listeners will have heard about the Sunland Group's twin tower proposal for the Spit here on the Gold Coast. Put simply, Sunland want to build twin residential towers on land now occupied by Mariners Cove next to Marina Mirage. The towers are 44 stories and shaped like contorted cork screws. I am not sure why humans like or dislike shapes and colours but fashion is transient. Today's architectural masterpiece is tomorrow's visual anxiety. My comment today is about this audacious plan to build on public land and in apparent breach of the long established 3 story height limit for the Spit. Some speculate these projects start in back rooms and over long lunches with politicians and developers and of course Council, all keen to help whether it's in the public interest or not. The Head of the Sunland group Soheil Abedian says it's all about architecture but to many of us it's all about public land and the unique location of the Spit and what we the people want and not his shareholders.

This twin tower project, if approved, will be the new bench mark for building height on the Spit and in any case it also requires the reclamation of at least 70 meters of seabed to create more land with a total reclamation of well over 5000 square meters. Bear in mind all the land is publically owned and leased out for appropriate use. The current lease has a little over 50 years to run and should not be changed, in my view. The Land Act 1994 section 132* requires a Land Evaluation Report with significant community involvement and the public's aspirations ascertained, yet no meaningful community consultation appears to have been carried out. This of course is a common hall mark of the Gold Coast City Council which circumvents the public will and the public voice wherever possible. The Water Police and Queensland Fisheries object to the development as does SeaWorld and the Save Our Spit group and the Main Beach Community Association. Traffic generated will create grid lock and the Sunland plans for traffic remediation fall well short of doing much at all.

The Main Beach Association quite rightly claims that the minister for Natural Resources Anthony Lynham has abrogated responsibility to the Gold Coast City Council and yet the Council's objectives are entirely different to the departments. Minister Lynham said in a speech to the Queensland Parliament in 2014 ***" I hold concerns as to the path this government is taking, a path of pandering to vested interest groups, of listening only to those who have the resources to donate and of adhering to the politics of the lowest standards" and " I am concerned, very concerned that our parliament is losing the trust and respect of the people of Queensland"***. Well Minister Lynham you were right then and you are still right and devolving matters regarding the Sunland twin tower proposal to the GCCC is like putting the fox in charge of the hen house. Down here a bottle of Grange goes a long way. In fact it appears if the Council approve this development your own department will automatically approve the change of lease required. So much for representation and democracy Minister.

It is time that a master plan be developed for the Spit and one that takes into account the thoughts and aspirations of the public. A plan which recognises the importance of the natural world and all the creatures which rely on it. The Spit is our central Park, our refuge from the madding crowd and this twin tower developers icon is out of place on the Spit. In fact, Labours official policy is that the Spit would not be home to high rise. Some believe this only applied to areas north of SeaWorld but that's not what their policy says. So on this alone Minister Lynham you and your government should stop these monolithic twins right now else Labor is accused of breaking it's word to the people of Queensland.

Put simply the towers are totally out of character with the area and they eliminate 23 businesses born from free enterprise. The proposed aquarium and museum have no relationship with the Broadwater, while 44 stories sets a precedent for more high rise on the Spit. Traffic will be further impeded and boat and yacht navigation affected by the loss of part of the channel. So let's leave the last word to the head of Sunland, Soheil Abedian who is reported by the Bulletin on February 26 this year as saying ***"So one day if this goes ahead I will put out a sign for these associations, these Save Our Spit associations and the so-called architects who say they know something but they don't know sh**."*** Oh dear, so much for community respect Mr Abedian.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley

*Further reference https://www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/?a=109113:policy_registry/land-evaluation-report-prior-to-allocation.pdf
Undertaking a Land Evaluation Report prior to Lease renewal, Lease Conversion and State Land Allocation. PUX/952/094