



KEW COTTAGES COALITION Inc.

Reg # A0044698H

NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2008



PUBLIC MEETING

TIME TO GO!

at Kew Cottages and Kew Residential Services

MC: *Rod Quantock*

8.00pm Tuesday 5th February 2008

**Where: Phyllis Hore Room, Kew Library
Cnr Cotham Road & Civic Drive, KEW**

Topics for discussion:

- ◆ Report on the Parliamentary Inquiry into Public Land Development
- ◆ Why Walker wants to sell out of Kew Cottages
- ◆ Why Walker must go
- ◆ How Brumby can help Walker to go now.

STOP PRESS.

For an Update on current developments at Kew Cottages please join a Pre-Meeting Tour.

The Tour will start at:

Time: 7pm Tuesday 5 February 2008

Location: The Wills Street picnic area, Cnr Wills & Redmond Street Entrance to Kew Cottages and Yarra Bend Park

This will be especially helpful for Wills Street and other residents effected by latest Subdivision Application. See www.kew.org.au/whatsnew for more details

Convened by Kew Cottages Coalition Inc.

**www.kew.org.au
admin@kew.org.au**

Why Walker Must Go.

The Government says that the new Community houses for the intellectually disabled residents are nearly finished. It is nearly 7 years since Bracks promised he would build them. The houses are late, and they are not exactly what the residents families asked for at the time, but choice doesn't appear to have been very high on Brack's agenda at Kew Cottages in 2001, at least not for the disabled.

The costs to the community has already been too high. Disability waiting lists have grown longer. The long tradition of an independent Public Service in Victoria has been trashed. Melbourne's Metropolitan Planning has been bastardised. A potential Aboriginal archaeological site identified by experts has been ignored And the Lower Yarra Valley's Green Wedge has been secretly amputated. The environment has suffered badly. Too many trees have been bulldozed. And Walkers are now being prosecuted by Heritage Victoria for several breaches of the Heritage Act.

The good news is that ALL of the Cottages the land is still Crown land not private land. And only a third of that land has so far been sub-divided. As a consequence Walkers and the Brumby Government have now run out of land to sell.

So as soon as the new Community Houses are finished will be a good time for Walkers to go, before any more damage is done.



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Why Walkers wants to go.

Walkers CEO John Hughes has explained to the Public Land Development Inquiry just how his boss Lang Walker came to put the whole of his extensive property portfolio on the market soon after Rob Hulls, then Victorian Minister for Planning approved the Walker Development Plan for Kew in March 2006.

Hughes explained how Walkers rival Mirvac subsequently came to purchase a \$1.2 billion package of Walkers properties in January 2007. Hughes said Walkers would have been happy to on sell all of the Kew Cottages housing project as part of the deal, but that required Government approval. He said that he understood it was only the Bracks Governments concern to get the KRS Community housing completed that stopped them approving Kew Cottages as part of Walkers deal with Mirvac.

Mirvac have since told the Inquiry how they subsequently came to acquire a 'put-and-call' option from Walkers on the remaining stages of the Kew housing project. And Mirvac CEO Greg Paramour told the Age in May last year that he expected the Government to approve his company taking over the latter stages of the housing project'.

Walkers is behind schedule completing Stage 1, and according to Hughes evidence to the Inquiry he was in no doubt Walkers would be forced to pay \$750,000 per month in liquidated damages to the State starting from 30 November 2007 until the KRS Community houses were completed.

Meanwhile Walkers say that they have now sold all of the remaining 54 lots in their Stage 1 subdivision. On the evidence available then, they have asked for permission to go, and all that is keeping them at Kew is their October 2006 agreement with the State of Victoria, an Agreement that is now expected to come under increasing scrutiny from the Parliamentary Public Land Inquiry.

Why Brumby must tell Walkers to 'Go Now !'

The Victorian Government 'Public Private Partnership' with Walker Corporation has proved to be a two edged sword for both parties. Both have been embarrassed by recent revelations of the nature and form of their relationship behind closed doors. Both will be unsure as to just how much the other has to fear from further probing of the Kew Cottages affair by the Parliamentary Public Land Inquiry.

The Government now has the additional problem of not knowing for sure just what dangers it has been exposed to as Bracks systematically 'turned off' one after another of the planning system's safety valves at Kew Cottages between 1999 and 2006.

As recent events in jurisdictions as different as the WA Anti-Corruption Commission and the French Banking System have shown, the problem of 'rogue-traders' is a real one that requires careful monitoring. At Kew Cottages Bracks started by first changing the Boroondara Planning scheme followed by the Metropolitan Planning Scheme, then he went on to remove the local Council from its planning responsibilities, rezoned the Kew Crown Land, withdrew third party appeal rights that have existed for over a century, tried to ensure his Heritage watchdog was a toothless tiger, and then for good measure in 2005 invoked the Project Management Act as an additional smokescreen to hide behind.

What Bracks did not do has also left Brumby with a potential time bomb on his hands at Kew. Bracks refused repeated calls to establish an anti-corruption commission. So Brumby now has no one left to turn to to give him a clean bill of health on Kew Cottages. Brumby might be inclined to let sleeping dogs lie so far as Richardson's role in the Kew Cottages Affair is concerned, but he knows now that the Australian Taxation Office has taken action against Mr. Richardson and more media probing is now inevitable.

Brumby too has now run out of land to sell at Kew Cottages.. To sell more he will first have to do another subdivision. So now is a good time to quietly tell Walkers to go back to Sydney, and to go quickly, for sake of all the people of Victoria.

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