

SECRET REPORT TO DECIDE ROUNDHOUSE FATE

A decision on the fate of the Roundhouse site will be made this week.

In Confidential Report 14.2 in the Council Agenda for this Thursday April 18th Council is reporting on a new agreement for easements with the Ocean Shores Country Club on Council's proposed 11 lot subdivision of the Roundhouse land Orana Road Ocean Shores, prior to issuing tenders for subdivision.

The report states:

"The purpose of this report is to advise Council that a new agreement has been finalised and to report the matter to Council prior to seeking tenders for the works associated with construction of the subdivision."

The report and its Annexure 1 are confidential, so the community may never know the reasons why Council votes to go ahead with the subdivision, as the report recommends.

The Ocean Shores and wider Byron community have been fighting for years to stop this land being subdivided by Council and sold. Instead, the Roundhouse Action Group (RAG) and the Ocean Shores Community Association (OSCA) have requested Council many times to dedicate this land for public use as a cultural precinct.

The vision of RAG and OSCA and 90% of the local community is that the land be retained for public use.

In a Shire famous for its cultural arts, Byron Council has never provided a permanent public art gallery.

The Roundhouse Action Group has long advocated for a public cultural building on the Roundhouse site, incorporating gallery, museum, theatre, cinema, restaurant and archival space. This can be done as a long term project without putting an economic burden on the Council.

The Roundhouse site is Heritage listed in Council's Heritage plan. It will always be associated with the founding of the town of Ocean Shores and, prior to that, with the regional dairy industry, the major economic driver of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Jack Bower's farmhouse "Oceanview" was on the site of the Roundhouse knoll.

RAG and OSCA calls on the new Councillors to keep their word made at the Ocean Shores Community Centre prior to the Council election and not subdivide the Roundhouse site, but retain it for public use as a cultural precinct. As one candidate, now councillor stated, "the Roundhouse site is a jewel in the crown of Ocean Shores"

Each Councillor has the right to a current appraisal of property market conditions and a 2013 replacement of the old, long superseded 2001 business plan which is the basis for previous decisions to subdivide. A land subdivision requires considerable borrowings, and is a risky enterprise, especially in a time of economic uncertainty.

The community agrees that the Roundhouse site is iconic and unique and should remain in public hands.

RAG and OSCA ask for the opportunity to manage the land under a lease arrangement, similar to other council property in the Shire, and that at long last, Council works with, rather than against the community, to present a report to Council on the public cultural community use of the Roundhouse.

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