



THE NIMBIN GOOD TIMES

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Damn the Dam

by Sue Stock

A Byrrell Creek dam in pristine platypus habitat has been voted the Tweed Shire Council's preferred option to augment the shire's water supply.

A second option, raising the height of the existing Clarrie Hall dam, was vetoed when the Mayor, Kevin Skinner, used his casting vote to side with pro-dam councillors Phil Youngblutt and Warren Polglase at a recent council meeting.

The decision came in spite of the fact that council staff did not support the development, and that there are a number of endangered and vulnerable species in the area, which adjoins National Parks and World Heritage areas.

Voting had been tied at three-all until Skinner's deciding move.

Three councillors – Katie Milne, Barry Longland and Dot Holdom -- put forward a rescission motion to have the decision reconsidered.

The motion was hurried through by Cr Polglase, leaving little time for the councillors to check their facts, or for the community to have any significant input. This rescission motion was reconsidered at an extraordinary meeting held on the 1st of November.

"Damn the dam" was the chorus outside Tweed Council Chambers when a group gathered to attend the extraordinary meeting. Stuart Cahill, from Burringbar Real Estate, said that the majority of Byrrell

Creek residents were in favour of the dam. He urged councillors to ignore the voices of what he called "professional protestors".

It was decided that there would be three speakers for and against the rescission. Michael Allen, an engineer, spoke first on the need for a secure water supply.

He applauded those councillors who supported the dam proposal. Cr Milne asked whether he had read the latest report from council staff which came down against the Byrrell Creek option. Mr Allen admitted he had not.

Michael McNamara, speaking against the dam proposal, said it would take at least seven years to get approval through all the state and federal legislation.

These laws include the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act, NSW Protection of the Environment Operations Act and the Federal Government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

The sensitive nature of the environment could trigger federal government involvement in a similar way to Queensland's Traveston Dam proposal last year, which was rejected on biodiversity grounds.

Joanne Gardner said the area was a significant wildlife corridor between three National Parks and two World Heritage areas. It was regarded as an area of high conservation value, and a biodiversity hot spot.

Cr Milne, of the Greens, spoke of the need for an independent review of demand management such as undertaken by the Institute For Sustainable Futures for



Anti-dam campaigner Joanna Gardner in front of the protest at the Tweed Council meeting.

the Tillegra Dam in the Hunter Valley and questioned the haste of the decision. Greater use of water tanks and grey water recycling should be considered for future developments. Cr Milne called for the issue to be deferred and for the council to seek an independent review.

Cr Longland spoke of the necessity for full community consultation and damned Mr Skinner's use of the casting vote on one of the biggest decisions being made by the council.

Mayor Skinner said the area was pristine and rich in biodiversity. He said he felt strongly about the environment, but also about water security. He said sharing water

resources was vital, and that the decision was about the importance of growth for the shire. Cr Holdom described the vote as "one of the worst decisions ever."

Tweed Shire Council includes in its charter the need "to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with, and promotes, the principles of ecologically sustainable development".

Despite this, the rescission motion was defeated. It may well be an important issue for local voters in next March's NSW State government election.



Sod-turning for new Nimbin skatepark

Nimbin skateboarders' dreams of a functioning skate park came a step closer with a ceremonial initiation of work on the site on 1st November.

The ceremony was attended by Lismore mayor Jenny Dowell, Federal MP for Richmond Justine Elliot, and several skaters including Connor Anderson (pictured).

Representatives of a number of community organisations were also present, as were Councillors Simon Clough and David Yarnell, and a large (for Nimbin) media contingent.

Funding for the new skate park has come mainly from a \$449,000 grant from the federal government's Regional and Local Infrastructure Program, with Lismore Council adding a further \$50,000.

Mayor Dowell acknowledged the role of community members, skaters and their families for following through with their desire for a skate park and seeing it become Council's first priority for the federal funding.

The new skate park will be constructed by Concrete Skateparks Australia, with a completion date in late December 2010.

Trout the plumber has been busy cutting the old steel half-pipes into sections, to be lifted onto trucks and relocated onto his property outside Nimbin village.

It is hoped that Peace Park, now formally owned by Lismore Council, will live up to its name with the new installation, and avoid the noise attenuation problems that caused work to stop on the steel structure in 2006.

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See this month's new listings on page 22