

Bold bid to control Shire's growth

by respecting existing urban-and-natural environment

In its final year of office, Sutherland Shire's 15-member Council has produced an innovative draft **Local Environment Plan** which shows ways to change from the hectic "overdevelopment" of the previous Council to planning rules that put quality-of-life of its 215,000 residents first, by respecting the existing urban-and-natural environment.



Maps help residents to locate their area of concern, which can then be found in the LEP document... as these residents are doing at the Environment Centre. Copies are also available at Council or any Shire library.

Councillors have responded to residents angered by the UNCONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT that has imposed Meriton's huge complex on Caringbah, Northies 14-storey hotel on Cronulla, forests of high-rise flats on many suburbs, bulldozed slopes and tasteless mansions on waterfronts, and, everywhere, traffic congestion.

Council's "bold bid"

The *draft LEP (dLEP)* is now on exhibition. Residents are asked to comment. It has been 2 years in the making by councillors, planners and community representatives.

"The result," says community rep Neil deNett, "is a much researched, keenly debated and, finally, bold bid to meet the Shire community's call to curb overdevelopment."

"In a remarkable achievement, the confusing mass of old plans and policies – intelligible only to professional planners – has been rationalised into a single document which will become

a model for all of the State's 172 councils.

"Where some criticism has tried to discredit this *dLEP*, it has almost entirely come from biased developer-interests, which is really a recommendation. Of course, detailed improvements can be made, and that is what the exhibition is asking for. I have a few myself."

Understanding the document

The new document, officially termed *Sutherland Shire Draft Local Environment Plan 2003*, is unavoidably large.

But its opening "Structure Plan", of 60 pages, is an easy-to-read introduction which can be scanned quickly – and merits reading by every Shire citizen.

It provides an overview of the Shire's priceless natural assets and the impact on them of urban occupancy, making clear that residents' quality-of-life rests on wise planning

of the interdependence of nature and urbanisation.

That is what *dLEP 2003* boldly attempts. The rest of the 617-page document is detail of importance, to be consulted by anyone who wants to look up specific site requirements. (Council has advised that an Index will be provided to assist such consultation.) An impressive set of maps provides a quick guide to location of issues relevant to any specific development site.

The document can be read at Council's inquiry desk, at Shire libraries, or at Sutherland Shire Environment Centre. It is also available on the Council's website www.sutherland.nsw.gov.au

Council can justly claim that it has consulted the Shire community more widely than for any previous LEP, and its publicising of this draft for comment is far more extensive than ever before.

It confronts the big problems

Nothing seems to have been overlooked. The document's "Matters for Consideration" cover the Shire's big problems: transport, urban design, flood and bushfire risk, bushland preservation, foreshore protection, sustainable development and much more. Under *Transport*, for instance, ways are considered to encourage alternatives to motor car dependence. Under *Waterfront*, ways to claw back the scenic foreshores by shifting the building line back. Under *Master Plans*, ways to augment the LEP with detailed local plans if need be [a contentious matter: see box].

As to the complex issue of providing for future housing – under prudent controls – Council has pointed out that the *dLEP* has not attempted a new *Housing Strategy*. The existing strategy (adopted in 1996 with small updating in 1999) continues to operate but will do so under the tightened considerations of the *dLEP*. Tightening of this kind has never depressed property values in the past.

What the community wants

The present Council has delivered *draft LEP 2003* in a bold bid to honour the promise it made to electors in 1999 to curb overdevelopment and bad development and to protect the threatened natural environment.

Hardly surprising, then, are the attacks on this draft *LEP* which are coming from some (by no means all) developers, real estate agents and waterfront owners.

Nor is it surprising that some old hands in State Government's



The LEP aims to protect and enhance the Shire's urban-and-natural environment by putting in place sensible planning conditions.

PlanningNSW are nervous about our Council's innovative – all in a single document – *draft LEP 2003*.

Council's covering letter which launched the document for the community's democratic scrutiny advises that: "Unless we can demonstrate widespread community support, it will not be approved by PlanningNSW".

So opponents of overdevelopment and lovers of our natural environment need to drop a note of support

to Council (PO Box 17, Sutherland NSW 1499). If you have a specific criticism, do write that into the expression of support. The Shire's future depends on us all.

Please, submissions by 31 May! Council's planners will then incorporate amendments in the document and exhibit it again in August.

Bob Walshe
Sutherland Shire
Environment Centre

Only a few high risk areas of the Shire have sparked controversy. One is the waterfront: how much development? how much retained bushland? what is good design? how important is visual impact?



Examples of constructive criticism

The *draft LEP* is on exhibition to invite community criticism, e.g.

- Use Master Plans to complement but not override the *LEP*.
- Good *LEP* standards call for stricter compliance than Council currently enforces.
- How about a prioritised plan to redress major past damage to the environment.
- Prohibit building close to the Lucas Heights reactors.
- Huge developments (like Meriton at Caringbah and the current Sharks Club proposal) should be prohibited by the *LEP*.
- Council's waterfront protection measures are commendable, but why have they not been enforced before now?