

AVALON PRESERVATION TRUST

Incorporated as AVALON PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

Chief Executive
National Parks & Wildlife Service

29 April 2016

Barrenjoey Headland

We are writing to express our concerns about NPWS concept plans for short term accommodation at Barrenjoey Headland and in particular use of the lightkeepers' cottages. We welcome the recent opportunity to discuss these matters with your representatives and Hon Rob Stokes MP. At that meeting it was made clear that you are seeking feedback on the concepts and not considering financial feasibility so we have not addressed financial issues although we would anticipate major difficulties.

In regard to the two fisherman's cottages we see two options, either to rebuild them or to demolish them and rehabilitate the area. In the event of rebuilding some method of supervising the ban on vehicle access along the beach would be needed.

On the other hand we are totally opposed to the conversion of the lightkeepers cottages for short stay accommodation for the following reasons---

ACCESS

The concept proposals state that no vehicle access will be permitted beyond the existing carpark. We applaud this intention but have no confidence that it would be sustained.

Guests who would be attracted to this area, including international visitors, would expect quite high level accommodation and many would not be willing to carry their baggage and enough food for several days along the beach and up the walking track. There would soon be demands for a shuttle bus.

Contractors for room servicing and cleaning would also soon demand vehicle access.

Guests not wanting to prepare meals would expect transport to restaurants and return late at night.

In short we believe a ban on vehicle access would very soon be overturned given the pressure of making a return on very substantial investments. This is not solved by using "beach buggies" as in our view the beach and the walking track are completely unsuitable for safe shared use by walkers and any vehicles and we see this as being of paramount importance and it would be heightened by a rapidly increasing number of walkers.

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EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

We see an issue with these very special public buildings not being available to the public and being alienated for a small number of guests. Therefore we believe the focus should be on finding appropriate uses that can be enjoyed by the rapidly growing number of walkers---if it is 200.000 per year now we can expect 400.000 within a short period as the increase is already quite tangible.

HAZARDS

We see multiple hazards which would have to be faced by NPWS---

- Vehicles on the walking track, as above
- Unsupervised occupants in these precious buildings and the risks of damage and fire. Charging a bond would not be relevant.
- The risk of children falling off cliffs---fencing the area would hardly be appropriate. There is little for children to do here compared with say Currawong or the Basin.
- The need to provide disabled access would provide considerable difficulty and risk
- Medical evacuation in the middle of the night would be an onerous responsibility

SUMMARY

For the reasons outlined above we urge you to withdraw from any proposal for short stay accommodation in the lightkeepers' cottages and to concentrate on finding uses for these buildings which can be shared by the large and rapidly growing number of walkers visiting the area. We, and, I am sure, other community groups, would welcome the opportunity to assist in achieving this outcome.

Yours faithfully

Peter Mayman
President
Avalon Preservation Association
29 April 2016