



# Long Reef Surf Life Saving Club

Incorporated (Y 07311 – 44)  
ABN : 78 012 537 376

SLSNSW 2004 & 2005 'Club of the Year'

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Wednesday, 8 June 2011

Dear Long Reef Member,

On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2011, the Long Reef Board of Management met to discuss the on-going Long Reef redevelopment process. During the meeting the following motion was approved:

***"Long Reef SLSC will suspend all involvement in the current redevelopment process including any participation in the Straight Talk process."***

The board did not make this decision lightly, however we feel this process has created a lot of tension with the community, and as a volunteer and community organisation it is not our goal to create disharmony. As it almost appears there is no end in sight, we have made this decision to hopefully alleviate some angst that has developed.

I will attempt to provide you with some background information for this decision and the journey that several of us within the club have had to endure in an attempt to improve facilities for and on behalf of the club members and the community that take advantage of our services we as a club provide.

## **STAGE 1 – Initial Redevelopment Project**

The initial formal discussion on the redevelopment of Long Reef SLSC took place in 2002 with the then Warringah Administrator Mr Dick Persson. In 2003 the club engaged Gordon and Valich Architects to progress the redevelopment and submit a development application works.

To take a quote from the 2003 LRSLSC Annual report it reads;

*"The main components of the redevelopment are:*

- *Increased storage area for lifesaving equipment on the ground floor;*
- *A second floor incorporating a new main hall area, caretaker accommodation, a second hall primarily for community based activities and a top level observation deck.*

*Overall the underlying philosophy of the redevelopment is to provide quality facilities for Club members, greater access for the wider community groups and to generate a revenue stream to ensure the Club's financial independence and long term viability."*

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The above excerpt was written by the Building Committee, which at the time consisted of Dave Watson and Bruce Gaal. Certainly not a lot has changed from these statements made 8 years ago and undoubtedly our membership and beach attendance has increased extensively in this time.

## **STAGE 2 – Redevelopment incorporating SLS Sydney Northern Beaches Branch Office**

In May 2006 Long Reef SLSC had the opportunity for significant State & Federal Government funding to build a regional lifesaving facility incorporating the SNB Branch offices. Considerable time was put into this project, lead by then Long Reef SLSC President Rob Pearson and former SNB Branch President Tony Haven. However, there was significant community opposition lead by community groups and individuals including Wendy Harmer, Tom Kirsop, Brendan Donohue and Paul Jaffe. The club sustained a large amount of media scrutiny at the time over having the Branch offices within the building. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2006, the club was forced to withdraw the DA submission with Warringah Council not having the ability to grant owners consent as apart of the Crown Land and Griffith Park Plan of Management.

## **STAGE 3 – Stutchbury Concept**

The then administrator of Warringah Council Dick Persson made it his personal project to resolve the issues after such debate and engaged architect Peter Stutchbury. Stutchbury prepared a concept designed based on instructions from council and Persson's own thoughts as to what the club needed and would be community friendly having a minimum impact on the local community. Stutchbury took very limited instructions from the club during this process. This plan and concept drawing was presented at a public meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2008. The club was far from impressed with the design layout as it did not meet the clubs needs and were done with little consultation. The community was also totally against the concept. LRSLSC submitted a comprehensive list of requirements and desires to Warringah Council following this public meeting for the future redevelopment of the Long Reef site.

Following the Stutchbury concept several meetings were held between Dick Persson (WC administrator) Rick Hart (WC General Manager), and community individuals including; Wendy Harmer, Brendan Donohue and Paul Jaffe, with the club being represented by Peter Selosse, Jim Selosse and myself. During the public meeting discussing the Stutchbury concept significant community feedback and information was gathered. This information highlighted to council community concerns for the unique area. It was during one such meeting held at Warringah Council on the 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2008 that the community stated the club could not have a second floor due to the line of sight and impact on the community of the building in its current footprint. During this meeting LRSLSC representatives suggested to relocate the club to the other side of the carpark and grass area in order to facilitate a second floor of a new footprint. This was considered during this meeting far less intrusive on the environment and existing dune system and was supported as a better alternative.

## **STAGE 4 – Eeles Trelease Concept**

Over the last 2 years council has engaged architect Eeles Trelease. The club has had significant contributions with the architect who won the council tender. Jim Selosse and myself have had numerous phone calls and meetings with council staff and the architect to design an operational and functional building to cater for our immediate and long term future. We have reviewed the very

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successful Gosford Council built surf clubs as well as other projects that have been completed around NSW.

Our club negotiated and compromised along the way working within the rules of the Griffith Park Plan of Management. Warringah Council has been successful in updating that Griffith Park Plan which allows now for café facilities within the club. Along this journey the goal posts have changed several times and we have attempted to compromise and review the plan accordingly.

Since February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 the councillors have meet on a number of occasions to discuss the development concept. This concept has been developed over the last 2 years by Jim Selosse and myself working with council staff.

### **STAGE 5 – The Community and Consultation**

After initially passing the motion it was rescinded on the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2011 only to again be overturned during a 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting in April, with the building having a reduced commercial capacity.

Unhappy with this outcome, a small group of the community (Save Long Reef – led by Michael Gleeson) has continued to lobby council to reject the plans. This resulted with the community engaging their own architect and without any consultation of the Long Reef SLSC Board of Management designed their own vision of what our surf club should look like and how it needs to operate. This design was certainly a reduced scale and did little to increase facilities that the club has and would have caused the club to invest all of its money for little more than we currently have. Most importantly, the building would also fail to generate an adequate financial return based upon our current income for the investment that we would have been required to make. In addition the building concept did not look towards the future needs of the club 20 or 30 years down the track, which is vital for this kind of investment.

The club has tried to consult and work with the community groups with the club meeting with a number of community groups in a self-initiated workshop held on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2011. During this meeting a number of main concerns were identified, including:

- Commercial food area;
- Location of the building;
- Lack of community consultation, and;
- Bulk and scale of the concept.

As a result of these issues the club again reviewed the plans reducing certain aspects of the design however these were again unacceptable. It has also been frustrating that since this is a council generated design we have not been able to have direct access to the architect and have lost control over the development process. The Council in May 2011 unanimously appointed a company called 'Straight Talk' to hold three 'community meetings' over the next few months to discuss the Long Reef development process.

### **STAGE 6 – The present**

It appears that since 2003 our plans have not changed a great deal. Long Reef Beach is no longer a small and quiet beach; it is now widely used by a large and varied group of the community, with this

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year over 134,000 individuals attending our beach on the weekends over summer. Our focus has been to increase storage and lifesaving facilities during this time as well as to develop an income stream to meet the increasing costs of running the club.

Long Reef SLSC's primary focus is on lifesaving (patrols), education and youth development. This is something we are very proud of. Competition makes up a component of club activities but this is certainly not a strong focus within the club and there is very limited private competition equipment stored within the clubhouse.

### **STAGE 7 – Suspension of Involvement**

Yet again some of the community continued with its war of attrition, but as volunteers we have so many other areas to manage and the building is just one thing. Our councillors also have had the opportunity to deliver and approve the agreed concept rather than continue with community discussions but have unfortunately failed to deliver on promises yet again.

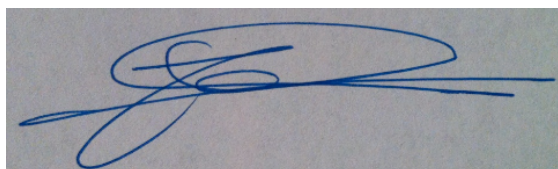
This continuous community opposition and recent abuse of our members and our club in the media, social networking sites, including abuse in the local area is totally unacceptable behaviour. The community's behaviour towards club members, who as volunteers have given so much back of their time for the protection of the bathing public and our local environment, concerns me deeply. In recent weeks I have been notified of personal verbal attacks in the street, at coffee shops and even at our annual dinner held last weekend at Dee Why RSL.

So in light of community anger towards us, lack of council support and progress, the board has decided the best course of action to take is one of withdrawal. This outcome I know is incredibly disappointing for the club after such a tremendous amount of work has been put in working towards new facilities over the last few years, however this process has come at a significant emotional and financial cost on our club and upon our membership. For now our club has no alternative but to stand tall on our contributions of the past and move forward to hopefully a happier and healthier future.

Hopefully now that this difficult decision is out of the way, we can focus on next season and start to smile again and enjoy what lifesaving is meant to be about, having fun at the beach, and looking after the community.

Sincere regards,

Doug Lucas



President  
Long Reef Surf Life Saving Club

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