



Presentation Hearing re proposed Lauderdale Quay Development Southern Coastcare Association of Tasmania Michael Swanton

Background

The Southern Coastcare Association of Tasmania (SCAT) is an umbrella Coastcare organisation supporting Coastcare volunteers and groups in southern Tasmania. SCAT provides administrative support and brings groups together to provide regional perspective to their projects. SCAT fosters a network of Coastcarers and other Coastal stakeholders leading to more holistic coastal management outcomes in southern Tasmania. SCAT has secured sponsorship and grant funding to enable the member groups to undertake collaborative on-ground works. SCAT has organised numerous networking events and bus tours where groups can share their project outcomes and learn from each other. SCAT was awarded the 2008 Australian Government National Coastcare Award for these achievements.

SCAT comprises of an Executive and Committee of 17 people representing a diverse demographic of over 40 member groups and about 10 individuals. This amounts to over 600 volunteers in southern Tasmania caring for our coast. SCAT memberships represent a cross section of coastal stakeholders which has enabled us to foster a strong coastal network. SCAT's local Coastcare groups are made up of teams of dedicated volunteers that give up their free time to care for and restore coastal areas on public land. Together with them SCAT works hard to highlight coastal issues to the general public and educate people about how they can better protect our fragile and precious coastal environment.

Overview

For many years our members have volunteered their time to work on public land with dedication and passion to protect Tasmania's coastline and coastal values. The proposed development at Lauderdale is of grave concern to Coastcare volunteers as it has the potential to create precisely the type of impacts and issues that we have been working hard for many years to mitigate. This proposed development perpetuates a sentiment that the coast is a resource to be exploited rather than an environmental icon to be valued.

Coastcare volunteers are concerned that if this type of development is allowed to occur at this site – what site will be next? It creates a dire precedent for inappropriate and ecologically disruptive housing estates on our coastline in Tasmania and will set an expectation that it is desirable to live on the waterfront no matter what the cost to the natural environment.

Conservation Area and Bird Values

The land is currently a Conservation Area and is public land. Conservation Areas are declared to protect particular values in an area, in this case shorebird values. The protection of these shorebirds should not be allowed to be compromised by this development.

The proposed development area is an important habitat for local and migratory shorebirds which depend on this habitat for feeding. There is no way to ensure that these birds will in fact relocate to the site proposed by Walker and there is no evidence or guarantee provided by Walker that this will occur. The pressures on other suitable feeding, breeding and roosting sites in south eastern Tasmania are already very high.

The area is public Land. The Lauderdale foreshore is a **Conservation Area**, declared to protect the feeding and roosting habitat of the hundreds of resident and migratory shorebirds that rely on the area each day of the year.

One of the key objectives of a Conservation Area is to conserve natural biological diversity. The destruction of the sea bed and subsequent loss of sand dwelling invertebrates and other subtidal and intertidal species will result in a loss of biomass and alter the food chain. This will impact on all the species that are part of this habitat, especially the resident and migratory shorebirds, for which this area is so highly valued, because they rely on these invertebrates for food.

Australian Pied Oystercatchers are an iconic feature of the Lauderdale foreshore, are long lived (20 to 30 years), are faithful to the same breeding territory and mate for life.

Several thousand Red-necked Stints migrate to Southeast Tasmania each year from Siberia to feed for up to six months. Important feeding and roosting (resting) sites for stints and other migratory shorebirds are the inter-tidal mudflats at Lauderdale.

It is not acceptable to remove 50% of the foraging habitat for our native and migratory waders. There is no evidence to support the claim that the birds will use the offset area created to replace habitat and even if they did it will be 50% smaller than the existing foraging area. It is not acceptable to create impacts on these species that cannot be mitigated. In addition the proposed offset area is currently degraded, and there is no guarantee that it can be restored to a fully functioning ecosystem that will compensate for the loss of Ralphs Bay, particularly with historic leachate contamination from the old tip.

Tasmania is very fortunate to still have natural coastal areas that have breeding and feeding shorebirds. Many of our member groups have dedicated many years to protecting shorebird habitat and educating the public about shorebirds and the threats to their survival. Our groups are distraught that their hard work and dedication over the years could be undermined so profoundly by such a development.

The development of residential housing on this site will alienate a natural coastal area that is currently valued by the public for its scenic qualities; birds and bird habitat sites; and natural estuarine values and turn it into mostly private land. The impacts on the natural values of this site, public access and visual amenity will be profound.

State Coastal Policy

The proposed development appears to contravene the following clauses of the Tasmanian State Coastal Policy 1996.

2.1.1. The coastal zone shall be used and developed in a sustainable manner subject to the objectives, principles and outcomes of this Policy. It is acknowledged that there are conservation reserves and other areas within the coastal zone which will not be available for development.

This development is proposed for an area directly adjacent a declared Conservation Area.

Whilst technically at this present time, the foreshore is part of the Conservation Area and the sand-flats are not, the birds utilise both of these areas and impacts outside of the Conservation Area will threaten the values within the Conservation Area. Whilst this proposed development may not technically be within the Conservation Area it is 'an area within the coastal zone' which should not be available for development on the grounds that it will impact on the natural values that the adjacent Conservation Area was declared to protect.

SCAT looks forward to the day when the entire sand-flat area to low tide mark is declared part of the Conservation Area and the birds and their habitat are formally recognised for their intrinsic values.

2.1.5. The precautionary principle will be applied to development which may pose serious or irreversible environmental damage to ensure that environmental degradation can be avoided, remedied or mitigated. Development proposals shall include strategies to avoid or mitigate potential adverse environmental effects.

Walker Corporation acknowledges that "it is inevitable that the loss of resources, particularly areas of good quality wader foraging habitat, will result in impacts that cannot be completely mitigated or offset". *pXV DIIS Executive Summary*

2.4.1. Care will be taken to minimise, or where possible totally avoid, any impact on environmentally sensitive areas from the expansion of urban and residential areas, including the provision of infrastructure for urban and residential areas.

There will be an unacceptable level of disturbance of the natural values of this area during the construction of this development.

1.1.2. The coastal zone will be managed to protect ecological, geomorphological and geological coastal features and aquatic environments of conservation value.

1.1.3. The coastal zone will be managed to conserve the diversity of all native flora and fauna and their habitats, including seagrass and seaweed beds, spawning and breeding areas. Appropriate conservation measures will be adopted for the protection of migratory species and the protection and recovery of rare, vulnerable and endangered species in accordance with this Policy and other relevant Acts and policies.

This proposed development would be in an extremely sensitive and valuable coastal habitat protected as a Conservation Area.

In summary, the Committee of the Southern Coastcare Association of Tasmania on behalf of its member groups and individuals respectfully requests that the Resource Planning and Development Commission does not allow this unique and value-rich natural coastal environment to be destroyed. We ask the Commission to send a message to the Tasmanian community, and the rest of the world, that Tasmanians and their Government recognise and appreciate this incredible and rare coastal wetland area and the wonderful bird and wildlife that we are so fortunate to have here at Ralphs Bay, and that we are prepared to protect the area by directing potential developments to more appropriate terrestrial locations.