

SECRET MEETING TO DECIDE FATE OF LOT 107 OCEAN SHORES SPORTSFIELD

Next Tuesday January 10 at 10 am Byron Council will meet at the Council Chambers for an extraordinary meeting. Councillors will deal with a rescission motion against a previous decision on the sportfield land at Lot 107 Shara Boulevard Ocean Shores. Members of the public are entitled to attend.

Council made a decision at a confidential session during the council meeting of 20 December on whether Lot 107 would be sold to the RTA and for what price. The RTA wants to buy the site for highway construction compensation. If it is sold, the land will be turned over to the State Government for inclusion in the Billinudgel Nature Reserve. It will be part of more than 100 Ha of land bought by the RTA to be put in the nature reserve as a package of compensatory habitat for environmental harm caused by the Pacific Highway widening at Ocean Shores.

The public has not been informed whether or not Council has decided to sell Lot 107 and at what price. However, three Councillors have put in the rescission motion to force council to reconsider its decision.

At the same meeting council voted to recognise a 50 Ha parcel at North Ocean Shores as "suitable" for sportsfields. "That is a long way off becoming a reality. It will cost millions to buy and develop this site. We don't even know if it is still on the market. And if it is bought for sportsfields, the council and the RTA might want to put that in the nature reserve as well." said Les Ogsten, President of the Brunswick Valley Sports Association.

"The truth is, Ocean Shores is a fast growing town, and with rural areas such as the Pocket, Billinudgel and Yelgun communities, we are looking at a population of about 7000 to 8000 people, many of them children.

"We have only one junior soccer field north of the Brunswick River on which to play any kind of sport.

"We really need both the North Ocean Shores site and Lot 107. But in practical terms has council got \$2.5 million to buy and develop the North Ocean Shores land? Council already owns Lot 107. If council has got the funds to do both, that would be the ideal situation for our community.

"The 400 children at the Ocean Shores Primary School have nowhere to play sport. They could walk to Lot 107. They could also take part in the rehabilitation of the south western corner for habitat and wildlife corridor. We could do both on this site.

"That is why we have taken Council to court on this issue. Council would have to deal with the community's court action including a caveat and injunction before they can finalise the sale to the RTA.

"In December we instructed our barrister to call for a mediation process through the court. This was passed on to Council. In selling Lot 107 Council has shown they are not willing to mediate.

"The RTA has already bought more than 100 Ha of land at Ocean Shores to compensate for 6.7 Ha of native vegetation destroyed in the highway construction. Now they also want to take the children's sportsfield. What is Minister Joe Tripodi thinking of. He should refuse to buy the land. A petition is in circulation asking him not to buy Lot 107. We don't think he has been told it is a sportfield."

A spokesperson for the Ocean Shores Community Association is concerned the price will be in the vicinity of \$225,000 as offered by the RTA at Council's meeting of August 23 last year. "Council bought the land in 1996 for \$167,500. Ten years later they are going to sell for almost the same price. Is that responsible management of community assets?" asked Community Association Secretary Donna Hammond. "This land is zoned 6a open space and classified as community land. Council adopted a Plan of Management for Lot 107 on 19 April 1999. But we still are not allowed to use Lot 107. It is a rubbish dump."

For further enquiries please contact Les Ogsten 02 66804411 or 0417073701.