

Build it and they won't come**

Berrima Hotel SSD-66876472 Berrima Heritage Matters

Berrima Heritage Matters is a group of volunteers which formed following two community meetings last year. The key decisions from these 2024 meetings were:

1. 100% of people accepted that something needed to happen with Berrima Gaol as it had been sold. (21 March 2024)
2. 80% of people who attended the second meeting voted for no new construction outside the gaol walls. (18 April 2024)

We support adaptive re-use but within the gaol walls, that is, no new construction outside the walls as per the results of the community meetings.

While we support the re-development of the Gaol, the current proposal does not respect the heritage values of the gaol, its curtilage or the village, and is disproportionate to the size of the village.

The proposal fails to respect the State Heritage Listed walls – these walls should be seen in totality – the undermining of the western and eastern walls undermines them all. Any acknowledgement of criminal justice history of the gaol seems to be a few random engravings including on the wall leading into the underground carpark.

The basis for the State Significant Development Application is tourism. Our research shows that the proposal could have a negative impact on Berrima's existing tourism base because it fails to understand who Berrima's visitors are and why they visit.



Over the past 10 months we've operated from a pop-up shop at 2/13 Old Hume Highway, next to the General Store in Berrima. We opened on 21 February 2025 and will close on 30 November 2025. (photo 1 left)

We've talked to 1700+ people over this time. (This is a significant sample size and provides quantitative and qualitative data about Berrima's visitors.)

Of those 1700, 7 people have been positive about the Blue Sox proposal.

The remainder have expressed dismay, horror, disappointment, and disbelief, plus support for our campaign.

Our visitors told us they want to visit the gaol as a gaol including a modern museum displaying the 186-year criminal justice history from the brutal colonial years when the gaol was the toughest in the colonies through the WW1 German internment, to its renewal in 1949 as a training centre. Our visitors have told us they'd pay admission for a state-of-the-art immersive museum with interactivity to engage younger generations.

We would support a proposal from the current owner which involves a smaller hotel (less rooms), a smaller function centre (100 people rather than 300), a smaller bar/café/restaurant and replace the wellness centre with a museum.

During our 10 months, we've talked to:

- Berrima and other Southern Highlands residents

Plus visitors including:

- Multi-generational families
- Groups including golf, school reunions, book clubs, and weddings,
- grey nomads
- Day trippers from Sydney, Canberra, and the Illawarra including seniors on bus tours,
- School students on excursions to Canberra
- Weekend getaways
- People visiting relatives

Another important aspect is the backgrounds of Berrima's visitors – ranging from people on modest fixed incomes (pensioners on bus tours) to people, as I shorthand them, with five-star wallets. Most of the visitors are from the middle of this range.

I can say emphatically that the Blue Sox proposal has no appeal to the majority – more than 99% – of these visitors who come for Berrima's heritage, history, and its unique atmosphere and charm.

An exclusive entertainment precinct of the scale of the proposal will undermine these qualities and our visitors have expressed no interest in expensive hotel rooms, a signature restaurant and a wellness centre. As one visitor said to us, “Walk around the village and you'll feel better.”

Berrima won the 2021 best Australian small tourist town because of its existing qualities.

Blue Sox seems to believe it can re-invent who visits Berrima.

This mistake has already been made at Berrima's 1844 Taylor's Crown Inn with The Vault and now Citizen Kainbridge.

Both tried the exclusive wealthy patrons model (including high-end accommodation).

One failed and sold, and from all accounts, the second iteration of the model is struggling.

The building is now on the market and the future of the current lessee is unclear.

While Blue Sox claim they will deliver community facilities which will welcome all visitors and residents, the evidence in their own documents does not support this – the proposal is commercial with the four main facilities inside the walls being high-end user-pays. (photo 2)

We believe SSD-66876472 should be rejected because, rather than increase tourism in Berrima it may jeopardise Berrima's well established existing tourism base.

Thank you.

Jenny Hunter, Eric Savage, Paul Nemeth
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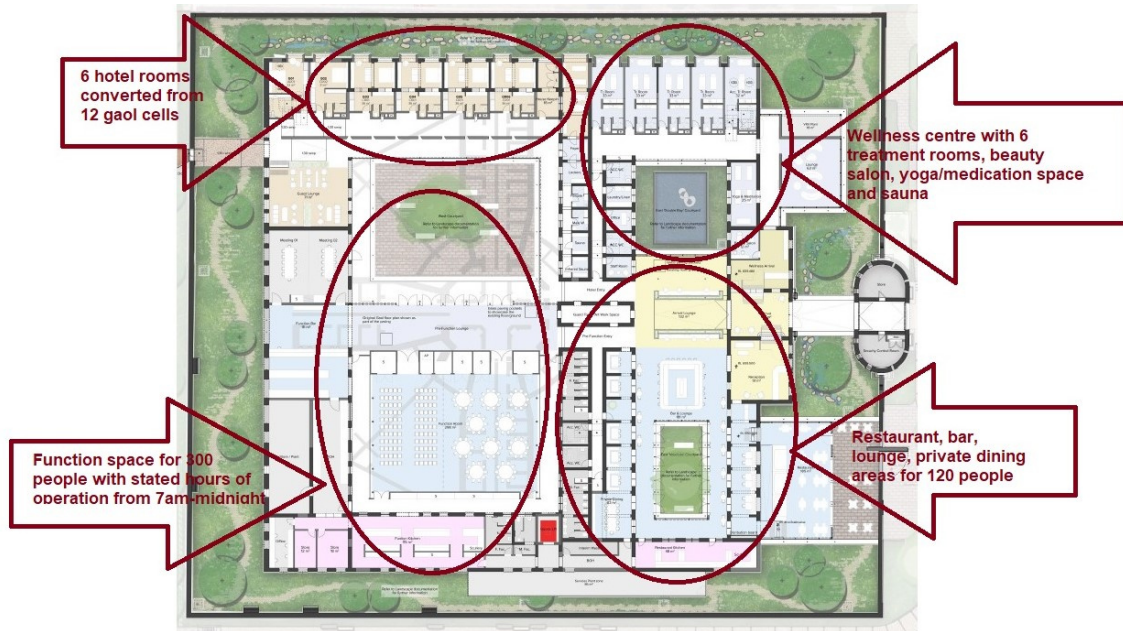


Photo 2. This diagram from Blue Sox EIS shows that all activities inside the gaol wall are commercial activities and not community activities as is claimed. (Note that the red-lined overlays were added by Berrima Heritage Matters.)

**co-opted and misused from 1989 movie, Field of Dreams.

Attachment

Sample pages from our research project

Visitors 21 Feb 2025

Saturday
#. ### ### 4 (57)

Michael 17 Wilkin St. 3 doors up the Hill
+ daughter
2 = BDH + FH Se
"Good luck"
Newcastle Hunt
No way
we are from
Spain
- they can't do
that can they
Oh my God
But this is Betman
His history
we can't look
this
good luck with
your fight
I'm on your side
Oh I am so sorry you
keep up the good
fight Strath

Monday 25th

Some things should just be left alone
just like a walking on development.
should be like a European / Asia
model as the introduction
of the village.

###

couldn't read online because
cataracts. Why can't
we download.

They want to destroy
the place
- if they do that we won't

come here.

hope you guys win
we come here
because it's relaxing

it's a goal with a
"certilage." -
that not Betman is about.

24.2.25

1
Berrima Gaol was
part of the
community
we were proud of
B. Gaol. [1980s]

- 11) from Wagga. Will go online
to check it out.
- 11) from Brisbane heading to
Canberra

Friday 28 March

11

We're appalled. How can we support you.

Monday 31 March

£

1111

"Seems a bit excessive. People want a good experience

"I hope it turns out okay. Good luck"

"We'll keep an eye ~~on~~ on it"

Thursday 27 March

111111

- No. I'd change Berrima.

- We don't come here for luxury. We come here for historic village feel

- Good luck. It shouldn't go ahead.

- It made me cry. I've been coming to Berrima for years. I'd change Berrima forever.

Friday 4 April

|||| I hope you are successful

|||| I don't mind it being developed
but that looks tacky.

- That's a shame

- That's a surprise!

60 Berrima hotel - I'm not keen on
that bit!

They need to do something
with it to preserve
its heritage

not in keeping at all

Saturday 5 April

||||

"There goes your tourism."
(visitors from Barroosa V, SA)

"not commercially viable ... Moss Vale
didn't then ask locals!"

Thursday 3 April

|||| |||

"We love Berrima. I live in America
now but wanted to bring my daughter
to where I grew up. so she

understands her heritage. The goal
has always been an important
part of our heritage. We don't
want to go to a wellness centre."

Group of six from Newcastle

"No that wouldn't be for us!

"We love Berrima. Gao! too!"

"I've lived here for 25 years, 40 years
in hospitality. This won't work
in Berrima."

Monday 7 April 2015 (12:30 start running late)

Michael Jonga - High

Michael Ellis - HMV view see car for Michael Admiety

~~13:30 start~~ !

||||

Tues 8 April

17:00 ~~||||~~
||||
||||
It's such a lovely town, it would just be spoilt from Argentina, via Bundanon!

It's just stupid, it's such a nice area, quiet at night.

Keep the charm, not what Bettina needs
unbelievable

William Taylor

Thursday 10 April

"builder: yes building costs have increased in past 5 years. You can become most things (sewer...)"

Saturday 5 April

closed at 2pm

||||

"Not the Berima visitor demographic"

Keep up the fight, great work (tap on shoulder)

"for out" - these developers get their hands on everything.
- that's awful, what ever makes money.

Sunday 6 April

||||

"So ugly" "So greedy" "Its heritage town"

"Its so beautiful. You could do so much with it"

FUCK - surely not, its heritage listed isn't it