

Subject: Objection to Blue Sox Development at Berrima Gaol

I am writing to formally object to the proposed Blue Sox development at the former Berrima Gaol site. This gaol is a place of exceptional historical value, representing a rare and intact example of Australia's early colonial penal history. Its stone walls, courtyards, and setting form a vital part of our national story. To cut through these walls or overshadow them with a large-scale hotel complex would cause irreversible damage to a site of profound heritage significance. Such a development would undermine the authenticity and integrity of one of the best-preserved Georgian villages in Australia.

Beyond the heritage concerns, the proposal raises serious questions about practicality and long-term viability. The plans for a hotel, function centre, and 140-seat restaurant would demand extensive staffing and operational resources. Berrima, while vibrant on weekends, remains a quiet village during the week. The proposed scale is inconsistent with the local market and is unlikely to be economically sustainable.

From my own experience in hospitality in the region, I cannot see how the proponents could make this venture profitable with the layout and business model they have presented. This raises legitimate concerns for our community: what guarantees do we have that the project will not be started and then abandoned when it proves financially unviable? Equally, what assurances exist to prevent a future re-zoning for residential apartments — a type of development this group is already known for pursuing? The risk of an incomplete or re-purposed project is deeply troubling and entirely inconsistent with preserving the historic integrity of the site.

Equally concerning is the impact of up to three years of heavy construction works, involving excavation and multi-storey building activity. This would create prolonged noise, dust, and disruption in our small community, deterring visitors and harming the delicate tourism balance that sustains many local businesses. Berrima's appeal lies in its peaceful streetscape and heritage charm — qualities that cannot coexist with a major construction site of this magnitude.

In summary, the Blue Sox proposal poses a grave risk to a nationally significant heritage site, presents an impractical and unsustainable business model, and threatens to disrupt both the community fabric and the local tourism economy. I urge the NSW Government to reject this proposal and to prioritise a heritage-led, community-sensitive approach to any future plans for the Berrima Gaol.