

## SUBMISSION FROM RAVENSTHORPE TOWARDS ALBION PARK BY PASS.

Ravensthorpe is a partnership of two Wollongong families, The McCallums and the Stones. The McCallums began their career in hospitality in 1987 at Ruby's Country Cuisine in Mount Kembla which went on to win many Local and State Awards and recognition in the Restaurant and Caterers Association National Awards as a finalist in best Specialty Restaurant.

The property at Ravensthorpe became available in 2000 and the Stones and McCallum's purchased with the view to restoring the buildings and opening to the general public as a Guest House, Restaurant and Function Centre.

The project was held up by issues concerning access and egress and others relating to Heritage but we pressed on and the business was officially opened in 2006. Since then Ravensthorpe has become the most desirable wedding venue on the South Coast, recently achieving the Gold Medal in the SCRTA Awards. Recently, Ravensthorpe was approached to present High Tea as part of a destination activity to offer the international clientele of the Carnival Super Cruise Line due to berth in Port Kemble next year.

Ravensthorpe has a wonderful following for High Tea, every Sunday up to 150 guests enjoy the fabulous gardens and Heritage atmosphere. Ravensthorpe caters to Special Celebrations, small and large Corporate Functions, several one off events and cabaret shows, as well as being a popular B&B.

**A unique part of the Ravensthorpe experience is the ability for the Bridal Party to enjoy the property for 24 Hours, the Bridal Party get ready in the Manor house and Cottage, hold the ceremony on site then enjoy their reception in the marquee and leave around 11am the following morning after a sumptuous Country Style Breakfast.**

The South Coast Regional Tourist Board has recognised the importance of the Wedding Industry to the local economy and is embarking on a campaign in the coming year to promote the South Coast as a wedding destination like no other, Ravensthorpe will be one of the flagship drawcards.

**With this in mind there can be no doubt that building the Albion Park Rail By-Pass so close to Ravensthorpe alone is enough to destroy what we have created. To allow construction to take place every weekend, will ensure the closure of Ravensthorpe completely.**

**We have over 70 bookings already for 2017 and need to know asap as to when we can start NOT to take bookings for 2018 and beyond!**

Ravensthorpe is a significant Local Heritage Building which has strong ties (recently discovered) with Ruby's Mount Kembla (old General Store) and the oldest existing residence in Wollongong, Little Milton, Smith Street Wollongong. {NSW State Heritage}.

On Site there are almost three acres of magnificent gardens, a Tennis court, Swimming Pool, a restored Georgian Manor House, Stables (Managers Residence), Cottage (formerly Dr Bateman's Surgery now accommodation), a ceremonial Rotunda and at the northern boundary of the property is a state of the art Marquee and Amenities building to accommodate special events for up to 200 guests.

**There is also accommodation for 5 couples in the manor house. A large part of the appeal of Ravensthorpe is the sweeping views of the escarpment to the West, a photographers dream, there**

**is no other venue like it. This \$2,5M investment in a plan for the future of our families is in jeopardy.**

Ravensthorpe employs 9 full time, including three apprentices and 20 or so part time employees, to be forced to close our business would mean the loss of jobs for all these people, including several family members.

There will be a major impact on our Suppliers, mostly local businesses; Beverages, Meats, Seafood, Vegetables, Dairy, Equipment and Maintenance, Laundry, Landscaping.

On top of this you can add the flow down effect that will hurt other businesses associated with weddings; Hair and Makeup artists, Dressmakers, florists, photographers, videographers, musicians and DJ's, Car Hire, Helicopter Hire, Accommodation throughout the local area, Stationary, and so on.

Our Partnership has worked hard to create a business that is a good corporate citizen, we support local charities and work with local schools.

From the beginning of the process of creating the Bi-Pass, I have been vocal in trying to ensure that best practice should apply in relation to the impact that this 50 year old design would have, firstly upon the Tait Family Dairy Farm and secondly in relation to the impact upon Ravensthorpe. I have become disillusioned with the whole process, yes we were asked for our input, yes, we were listened to but then completely ignored every step of the way. Except perhaps when it did not involve any additional cost to the project.

This 50 year old design is really not a good enough outcome for the people of Albion Park who have long suffered substandard infrastructure. A submission to cut and fill the North South runway of the airport has been apparently considered and disregarded due to costs of pumping water (it would be below sea level) The model for this study was late 1980's I believe, surely engineering design has improved over that time. We are taking the word of the RMS on this, perhaps an independent review would put everyone's mind at ease?

We are told if it wasn't for the Gas Line and the approach zone of the airport, the alignment of the road could be improved and a smaller amount of dairy land would be affected? Has anyone ever approached the moving of the Gas line? No.

Albion Park is the Gateway to the South, the Highlands and the City of Shellharbour, it is therefore crucial, considering the amount of growth in housing that we are to experience in the coming years, that we ensure that best practice is applied to this piece of infrastructure. The road should be bridged where possible to ensure flood risk is minimised, dairy cattle can roam and the wetlands suffer minimal harm. A design should be drawn up featuring on off ramps that work well into the future, only then should the project be costed.

**During the "Community Engagement" process, too many dollars were spent on going through the motions, ticking the boxes and coming out the other end with the same 50 year old plan.**

As for Ravensthorpe, this high quality, Internationally recognised venue with first class service that has become an important community facility and heritage landmark, will be destroyed.

Destroyed by a budget driven, 50 year old cheap and nasty solution to a badly neglected section of road. The RMS preferred option will be detrimental to Albion Park in many other ways, flooding and loss of valuable Dairy land and vandalised wetlands.

I ask the Department of Planning to take into account all of the above in regard to the request for weekend construction by the RMS.

**I ask also that an independent review be considered to put to bed the notion that there is no alternate solution. Just working to a budget is not good enough, we have waited a long time for this piece of road it should be done to a high standard.**

Yours Faithfully

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