

2 April 2008

Why my backyard is one hundred thousand square meters

My property is 25 acres and was purchased in 1988. I enjoy living in this area but maintaining the property is becoming more difficult as we age. Glenorie part of Baulkham Hills Shire Council and is 40 km from Martin Place and is about 45-50 minutes drive from the Mascot airport. The population of the area has been ageing for some time as no young family can afford to pay for 25 acres of land. The area is zoned 25 acres or more. Our children as they become teenagers move closer to city. The local school could lose one of its teachers next year.

In March 1990 Council informed us of their initiative for 'potential rezoning to five acre subdivision' of Cattai Ridge Rd between Smiths Lane and Halcrows Rd (I have a copy of the letter and the site map). Majority of properties in this area are already 5 acres or less. My property is 22 acres as 3 acres was given to the Hillside School (next door) to be built for their oval by previous owners.

The area is predominantly residential usage with these facilities available:

- Water Board's main
- Electricity (3 phase)
- Telephone, Broadband and Wireless
- Bus service
- Primary School (established in 1927)

As instructed residents engaged the services of 'Don Fox Planning' to carry out investigation. Don Fox report recommended that lot sizes be reduced, as did the earlier council rural land studies. In recent years with the ageing and death of some of the pioneer residents there is no agriculture activity left in the area and due to the cost of the land farming is not viable. Instead some trade people have moved in which their activity is somehow in contradiction to the original land usage such as trucking business, Some have erected industrial sheds which are used as warehouse and others carry other industrial activities which are damaging the environment. In contrast residential usage is the best way to protect the environment of the area.

My children have grown up and need their own accommodation. We are prohibited to build a second detached building for our children. With so much talk about shortage of land and cost of housing we are forced to keep a backyard of 100,000 square meters, even though the council's current LEP gives permission for the land to be used for 'caravan park', 'cemetery', 'place of worship', 'extrusion industry'.

While most would like to keep the area residential but with smaller lot sizes, the 'Baulkham Hills Shire' Council Development Control Plan published in September 2007 prohibits rezoning in Glenorie area and states that:

"The planning intent of this zone recognises the need to protect areas of scenic and environmental quality, provide for the agricultural use of land and to provide opportunities for the development of tourist facilities".

Why do we have to preserve our land so that others can go sightseeing and picnicking for free? What about our children?

The zoning in this area was established four decades ago and since then owners have been denied of their rights to put their land to its most productive use. The current zoning has been a disaster for the first home buyers, artificially inflating land prices in the midst of plenty.

Not every owner wishes to subdivide their land however there are some families in the area who would like to be given such an opportunity due to necessities of life.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Soghra Ahmadi Lashkenarie