

June 2023



## Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon Catchment



<https://www.narrabeenlagoon.org.au>

### The “Lizard Rock” proposal

As stated in our August 2022 newsletter, the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council have prepared a plan to convert a large area of bushland near Lizard Rock in the catchment of Narrabeen Lagoon to housing and set aside some patches for conservation.

The proposal is for 450 dwellings in areas that are currently covered in bushland. The plans for evacuating people in case of fire are totally inadequate.



The Department of Planning offered to make Northern Beaches Council the Project Planning Authority for this proposal but at their special meeting on January 24th, Northern Beaches Council voted to refuse to take that role because the Council is objecting to the proposal. The proposal is now going through the Gateway process.

Meanwhile .....

## Congratulations!

to Michael Regan, MP,  
on his appointment as our local Member of Parliament. In his first private member’s speech to Parliament, Michael specifically mentioned the situation concerning the Lizard Rock proposal. (Sue Heins now has the task of being Mayor of Northern Beaches Council in place of Michael.)

### LIZARD ROCK DEVELOPMENT SPEECH TO PARLIAMENT BY MICHAEL REGAN, MP MAY 11, 2023

**Mr MICHAEL REGAN:** I am honoured to deliver my first private member's statement on the issue of protecting Lizard Rock and the surrounding bushland from inappropriate development. The electorate of Wakehurst is very fortunate to have large areas of intact native bushland. The area includes Garigal National Park, the recently heritage-listed Manly Warringah War Memorial State Park, known as Manly Dam, and extensive areas of native vegetation surrounding Narrabeen Lagoon.

These natural areas support local biodiversity and are central to what makes the northern beaches that special. This spectacular natural beauty is one of the reasons people love to live in and visit the northern beaches. While many of those bushland areas are protected in perpetuity in national reserves and parks, much of the remaining bushland does not enjoy that level of protection.

Currently, over 200 hectares of bushland is under threat across Belrose, Davidson, Frenchs Forest, Oxford Falls and Allambie Heights. In early 2022 the former planning Minister approved the Northern Beaches Aboriginal Land Development Delivery Plan under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021. This move sidelined Northern Beaches Council and cleared the way for development proposals to progress for six sites owned by the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council on the northern beaches.

The first of those six sites to progress to a planning proposal is known as Lizard Rock, along Morgan Road in Belrose, where a development of over 400 homes has been proposed. The proposal will involve the clearing of some 45 football fields of pristine native bushland.

The previous planning Minister and his department were intent on bulldozing through with the proposal—pun intended—disregarding the overwhelming opposition from the Northern Beaches Council, the local community and the Government's own local Liberal MPs, including the former Speaker of the House, the Environment Minister, the Health Minister, and former Minister Stokes.

Northern Beaches Council has long been opposed to the Lizard Rock development and in January this year refused the offer to act as the planning proposal authority. As mayor of Northern Beaches Council, I have been a vocal opponent of the proposed Lizard Rock development since it was first mooted over a decade ago. In its submission to the Department of Planning and Environment, Northern Beaches Council outlined numerous and significant concerns regarding the Lizard Rock planning proposal. These included inconsistency with relevant strategic plans, including the *Greater Sydney Region Plan*, *North District Plan*, Northern Beaches Council's *Towards 2040—Local Strategic Planning Statement* and *Northern Beaches Local Housing Strategy*; inconsistency with conservation zones reform, which recommends applying a C3 Environmental Management Zone to most of the site due to its high environmental value and the hazards that impact the site; and unacceptable bushfire risks to the site and insufficient evacuation routes.

In those, and many other respects, the Northern Beaches Council found the proposal to be completely flawed. This is 400-plus homes in the middle of the bush, not connected to any services, surplus to any housing targets set by the State, which will exacerbate existing shortfalls in the provision of community floorspace for libraries and active open space for sports fields—oh, and destroy around 45 football-sized fields of bushland, not to mention the fact that it puts future inhabitants at extreme risk from bushfire. Have we learnt nothing yet? The New South Wales Government must find alternative ways to support Aboriginal self-determination instead of allowing inappropriate development on bushfire-prone land.

I totally support the intent of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and appreciate the importance of enabling Aboriginal people to achieve economic self-determination through developing their land. But we are required to consider all proposals on their merits, regardless of the landowner, and this proposal does not stack up. The Wakehurst community—indeed, the whole of the northern beaches—is overwhelmingly opposed to this development. At every opportunity the local community and local council have made submissions to planning processes opposing the project, but they have been ignored. Northern beaches residents have been rightly dismayed by how the former Government handled this issue. The Lizard Rock development was a high-profile issue on the northern beaches during the recent State election campaign. Under pressure from independent candidates, the former planning Minister did a last-minute backflip and committed to stopping the planning proposal to rezone the Lizard Rock site for residential development. But he has not told us how he was going to do that or what action, if any, he intended to take.

Protecting Lizard Rock was a key part of my election platform and I look forward to working with the new Minns Labor Government and the planning Minister to stop the current housing development proposal progressing. I thank the many dedicated locals for their advocacy about protecting the Lizard Rock site and surrounding bushland. In particular, I thank the Northern Beaches Bushland Guardians, Dr Conny Harris, Friends of Narrabeen Lagoon, Northern Beaches councillors and other independent candidates on the northern beaches.

This issue is currently the subject of two parliamentary petitions—one paper petition and one ePetition. The paper petition has recorded over 11,000 signatures so far and is still growing—a testament to the level of community opposition. I look forward to debate on that petition in this Chamber. We must find a long-term solution to protect Lizard Rock and surrounding bushland in perpetuity. This is a top priority for me, the electorate of Wakehurst and, indeed, all of the northern beaches, and should be for all of New South Wales because this could happen to anyone.

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