



## EDITORIAL

# The community fight back must start now!

## Council has relaunched the Town Centre Project with brutal urgency

Plans for a large scale shopping complex in Springwood—against the express wishes of the community— have been relaunched by Council. At the December 15 meeting, BMCC voted to move ahead with the development process.

In response Councillors Luchetti, Mays and Gibbs placed a rescission motion on the Council resolution. They argued the Council decision directly contravened Adam Searle's mayoral minute of February 2009.

Councillors McLaren, Greenhill and Miles were so overcome with the need to restart the process they caused Council to be reconvened for an extraordinary meeting on December 30, purely to have the rescission lifted. After 10 months of Council induced torpor, they were electrified by a sudden flash of neural activity and decided there was not a second to spare.

It was only coincidental these decisions had to be made in the middle of the festive season, just when the community would be otherwise absorbed and looking the other way. It was widely understood the Mayoral minute was designed to pause the project, to allow a period of consultation which would be followed by a poll or referendum. **The poll would be a simple yes or no vote on whether the developers should remain in the process.**

Apparently we were all wrong. The new process is the old process without even a lick of polish. There is now, more so than ever, the prospect of giant corporations presenting their detailed tenders. The offer of a poll at that point will only have the slightest film of democracy.

**Behind the veneer, the reality will be a community locked in an unequal struggle with giant corporations.** Whatever the purported intentions of the mayoral minute it smothered debate, and tied the hands of the opposition. It was a massive community tranquilizer.

The Council decisions are a harsh awakening. There is a wanton, blundering quality to the behaviour of those pushing this process. This recklessness can be contained in a nursery but not when the toys are the social fabric and heritage assets of our community. If this mess does congeal into a large scale shopping complex squatting on the Civic Centre site, it will be as a result of their actions.

And what is the quality of their work? Here is

a sample: Have they seriously considered the recently released consultants' report? They should, as it cost us all \$23,000. The report states general refurbishment is necessary but can be achieved without massive reconstruction.

The demolition of the Civic Centre would be pivotal to the present Council version of the Town Centre Project. In contrast, the report recognizes community support for the maintenance of this icon. It doesn't need destruction or relocation. It requires upgrading and refurbishment.

We agree. This is the tenor of the whole report. See the summary on the back page of this newsletter, or read the full report on the web page [www.springwoodforum.org](http://www.springwoodforum.org): "Springwood Cultural & Community Facilities Services - Needs Analysis".

The report reinforces our view that the community can identify its needs and achieve them in a measured, calibrated process. It doesn't require the gutting of our town. We don't have to join in the orgy of massive construction fantasies exciting these Councillors.

Have they considered the massive impact large scale construction will have on traffic flow? It will devastate the main street. After construction, the traffic snarls and gridlocks will be their gift to the future Springwood. Have they been in touch with the RTA? how old is the last traffic assessment on Springwood? Is it still relevant? We think not.

What about the other past reports that investigated Springwood's requirements. Where are they now filed? So much time, so many resources. And so it goes on.

This can be halted. However, councillors Luchetti, Mays, Gibbs, Clarke and McCallum cannot fight alone. Save Our Springwood cannot fight alone. If the battle for Springwood is to be won, it must be won by the community itself. All of us.

Time has suddenly become short.

The Fightback must start now. Come to the public meeting organised by S.O.S.!

**PUBLIC MEETING**  
**At Springwood Civic Centre**  
**Tuesday 2 March 2010**  
**7.30pm**

## HERITAGE: SPRINGWOOD LANDMARKS

## Springwood Civic Centre

Under threat from the Springwood Town Centre Project

**Pamela Smith** has provided the following account of the history of the Springwood Civic Centre.

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#### Early days

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The Civic Centre is located on part of Lot 2A which was created during the late 1800s when the village of Springwood was undergoing rapid development subsequent to the building of the railway line. The original owner of the portion was Frank Raymond who, in the 1870s, erected the Springwood Hotel on the portion where the current Oriental Hotel now stands. The first post office operated from that location.

In the 1880s, James Hunter Lawson, a city businessman, purchased all of Lot 2A. He demolished the old

Springwood Hotel and subsequently erected the Oriental Hotel and his family/country residence, Braemar House. Lawson also erected Glen Lawson (present day Danville), which lies adjacent to Braemar House soon after. William Lawson inherited the Springwood property following the death of his father.

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#### Council acquires the site

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Thus, it was from the latter that council purchased the portion (now known as lot A) in the 1930s/1940s. Public agitation for a public/community hall had existed in the area since the arrival of the first inhabitants, but after the Second World War it seemed that the facility might become a reality when land

was purchased and a War Memorial Hall Committee was formed. In 1949 the committee had £900 from fund raising activities and members were transporting sandstone from land at North Springwood owned by a Mr. Reid.

The Springwood area is known for the excellent quality of its sandstone and in fact the gates of Bathurst Prison were erected from sandstone quarried from this area. Plans for the proposed Memorial Hall still exist in council local studies collection.



Civic centre then ...

**“Loan funds, the general fund, Springwood local town improvement fund and a reserve fund as well as community fund raising made the public infrastructure a reality. ”**

In 1949, perhaps reflecting its future use, council approval was given to the local Springwood sub-branch of the Returned Services League to use the site. A hut was subsequently erected in the vicinity of Spellacy's temporary bus depot.

**The community of Springwood has had an enduring interest in this site spanning more than sixty years.**

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#### The Civic Centre emerges

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On 26th March 1966 Sir Roden Cutler, the then Governor of New South Wales opened Springwood Civic Centre which was built to Skarratts specifications. A commemoration booklet, printed for the occasion, suggested that Skarratt, mindful of the topography, utilized the steep levels of the site so that there was no waste of space in the building.

The architecture is typical of that era. The framework is steel with brick

facing and the foyer and staircase—leading to the second floor—are constructed of concrete. It is of interest to note that Alex Gall, the builder, was Alexander McLaren Gall who was President of the Master Builders Association of NSW in the period 1965–66.



Civic centre now ...

Sensibly, the front one-storey section—currently used by the Neighborhood Centre—was given a concrete roof so that a second storey could be added for future use, and M.Kinley, a stonemason from Faulconbridge, single handedly laid locally hewn sandstone to the outer walls. The commemorative booklet stated that it was the best example

of stonework in the Blue Mountains. **The building could be termed vernacular given its local architect, use of local stone and use of Kinley, a local stonemason.**

Loan funds, the general fund, Springwood local town improvement fund and a reserve fund as well as community fund raising made the public infrastructure a reality. Work commenced in February 1965, and in March 1966 Sir Roden, to mark the official opening, planted a lemon scented gum at the entrance to the civic precinct where a large sandstone rock was placed and still stands.

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#### The community role

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The centre was designed to serve as a multi function centre and has fulfilled a major role for the community of this area by providing a venue for engagement and coming of age parties, wedding receptions, musicals and other live performances and theatre

presentations. The hall has hosted council meetings, community educational and information programs, government elections, the monthly community run Ivy Market and various fundraising events for disasters like the Tsunami. It has functioned as a major public site for over four decades. The kitchen and supper room are used for seniors meals.

The one storey section immediately in the front of the hall housing the Neighborhood Centre (NC) originally was home to Blue Mountains

City Council Administrative offices until they moved to their present location. The NC performs many functions important to the health and well being of the local community. Meeting rooms within that part of the civic precinct are used by organisations like the University of the Third Age.

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#### The Centre's importance

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The Civic Centre while not old in terms of other historic items is truly representative of community aspirations and progress and sitting between

two older historic buildings, is representative of the changing nature and styles of Australian architecture.

We believe that the community will have no sense of its history or of how this fits within the scope of village progress and development if the Civic Centre disappears and Braemar House and the Oriental Hotel are compromised.

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Pamela Smith is a local historian and member of S.O.S.

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## SPRINGWOOD'S TRAFFIC MESS IS SET TO WORSEN

# No avoiding the traffic

How do the seven councillors who have voted to continue the madness of a multinational shopping centre complex in Springwood propose to fix the traffic issue? Or is the victorious proponent meant to pay to fix that too?

Reports commissioned by BMCC concede that there are serious issues currently plaguing Springwood with regards traffic congestion, which can only be aggravated by increased traffic attracted into the town by the presence of a large shopping complex and the accommodation of additional truck movement servicing any new development.

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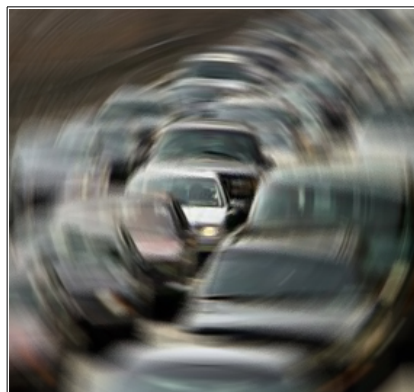
#### A large shopping complex ... and trucks

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The issues have been identified as

- The queuing onto the Great Western Highway from the left hand turning lane into the eastern end of Macquarie Rd;

- The congestion at the intersection/roundabout at Hawkesbury and Macquarie Roads; and
- The safety issues surrounding the volume of traffic passing the Springwood Public School and Pre School.



One report found that extending the left turn lane from the Highway into Macquarie Road is not a viable option due to the close proximity of the railway line.

The recommended long term option to solve this problem was the reconstruction of the Hawkesbury Road Bridge to accommodate on and off ramps to and from the highway.

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#### A solution? Hawkesbury Road Bridge

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According to council staff, the RTA, although being aware of these reports, will not act for the following reasons:

- Further works are not required due to low crash history;
- The long term option mentioned above is too expensive;
- No funding is currently available; and
- There are higher priorities across the state.

And yet we stumble on with this nightmare.

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## SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTANTS' REPORT COMMISSIONED BY COUNCIL

# What Springwood Needs

## Overview of Springwood Cultural & Community Facilities & Services – Needs Analysis

The consultants took into consideration 51 submissions received as part of the Springwood Town Centre Project. The document quite clearly points out that stakeholders and community members have demonstrated overwhelming support for retention of the Civic Centre (including

Neighbourhood Centre and Braemar) as a community and cultural precinct. **However, they did recommend refurbishment to bring the facility up to standard.**

The options which the consultants discussed reflected the concerns of stakeholders and community members:

- (1) Stakeholders were strongly of the view that all major cultural and community services should be located on 'one site', preferably the present Civic Centre precinct. This was the most cost effective option was least likely to lead to disruption in service provision.
- (2) Refurbishment of the Civic Centre was highlighted.
- (3) Extension of the library was also discussed.
- (4) There was a recommendation that the Integral Energy building be acquired for service delivery – but the report does not go into the options. However, an obvious strategy would be for the library and local studies collection to be moved to that location in a new purpose built facility with meeting rooms etc. Money could be obtained by way of grant funding for infrastructure. The benefits which would follow:
  - (a) Braemar Gallery could occupy the entire space giving them room for an office etc.; and
  - (b) Library space freed up could provide community meeting rooms or be integrated with the neighbourhood centre.
- (5) The analysis has a list of priorities that amongst others recommend:
  - (a) Refurbish and enhance Civic Centre (providing air conditioning etc.);
  - (b) Refurbish Neighbourhood Centre;
  - (c) Extend library building;
  - (d) The only commercial development they recommended was a cafe/bookshop in Cultural precinct (this might have use also for Braemar for selling artists works or supplies).
- (6) They set the criteria for their analysis on the basis of the current principles and values underpinning township design. Included were Cultural and Heritage Values. These relate to a set of principles including the value to the community which it serves. Furthermore, it is deemed to have Cultural Heritage Value when the building was established by that community by financial or in kind contributions! (See the story above, page 2). The community of Springwood took part in years of fundraising and may even have supplied the sandstone.

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## “The document quite clearly points out that stakeholders and community members have demonstrated overwhelming support for retention of the Civic Centre”

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The consultants report that the library building is in good physical condition but requires ongoing maintenance. They also recommended that Braemar be retained and that essential maintenance be undertaken.

While the consultants recognised the need to update and extend facilities they also acknowledged the depth of public feeling 'against' rebuilding the Civic Centre. They said the cost of building would need to be assessed against

the fact that the building is structurally sound. They felt refurbishment would meet the needs of current and future users.

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To view the full report go to: [www.springwoodforum.org/Issues/TownCentreProject/NeedsReport.aspx](http://www.springwoodforum.org/Issues/TownCentreProject/NeedsReport.aspx)




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### BACKGROUND TO S.O.S.

## Who we are

**Save Our Springwood** was formed to oppose inappropriate development and to support local community-based decision making

For those unfamiliar with the issue, its origins lie in the concerns of the community to preserve the character and history of the Springwood village by opposing a large scale shopping complex being forced on the community.

Formed as a local community group, Save Our Springwood (S.O.S.) is concerned about the loss of public land that could result from the current revitalisation process and the implications of public / private partnerships.

The group is dedicated to increasing transparency within the process and for community consultation to be the **first step**, not the last, in any future development within the village.

You can find our stall in the Springwood Town

Square, Saturday mornings 10am to 12pm.

To contact us email [mail@saveourspringwood.org.au](mailto:mail@saveourspringwood.org.au) or phone Chris or Jan on 4751 5312.

