

Notes of lobbying at meetings revealed

Andrew Clennell
STATE POLITICAL EDITOR

THE former Labor senator Graham Richardson has discussed at least six development projects with the planning department boss, Sam Haddad, this year and pressed hard for quicker government action, notes of the meetings show.

Last night the Opposition accused Mr Haddad of giving Mr Richardson "three-monthly updates" after the extent of the lobbying by Mr Richardson was laid bare in notes from three meetings between the pair. They were tabled in a Call for Papers in the upper house.

On March 9 Mr Richardson met Mr Haddad over proposed land releases at Leppington, Lowes Creek and Macarthur

Planning boss to appear before inquiry again.

South, the rezoning of Badgerys Creek Lands, a proposal to develop a National Ceramics Site in the Hunter Valley, a general discussion on the Bondi Junction local environment plan and a development at Sanctuary Cove.

The Lowes Creek and Badgerys Creek Lands are proposals from the developers Roy and Ron Medich in south-western Sydney; Macarthur South was a 62,000 house land release being sought by Lang Walker; and Sanctuary Villages is a proposal in the Hunter from Hardle Holdings. The Leppington proposal was one that came from Lang Walker.

Other meetings between the lobbyist and Mr Haddad occurred on June 15 and September 2.

On September 2 Mr Richardson arrived with Roy Medich and discussed the controversial proposal to rezone land owned by the Medichs at Badgerys Creek, which has now become the focus of the McGurk parliamentary inquiry, and the plan to approve a rezoning at Lowes Creek in south-western Sydney.

Roy Medich then left the meeting and Mr Richardson discussed Leppington East and Sanctuary Villages with Mr Haddad.

The June 15 note of a meeting involving Mr Haddad, a planning

official, Michael Comminos, and Mr Richardson gives an indication of the way the former senator turned lobbyist operates.

One note says: "Mr Richardson asserted that the East Leppington proposal in the growth centres had taken a long time to progress and that assurances should be provided on a time-frame for his clients."

Of the land at Badgerys Creek: "Mr Richardson commented that the Western Sydney Employment Area work commissioned some time ago should be completed, and he did not understand why things took so long".

The notes show Mr Haddad undertook to get another officer, Michael Comminos, to "verify whether a project manager [had been] attached" to the East Leppington project. Mr Haddad also told Mr Richardson he would seek advice on what Mr Richardson called "inconsistent advice" on the Sanctuary Villages proposal. Mr Haddad asked Mr Comminos to "speak to relevant departmental officers".

The discussion over Bondi Junction involved the fact Mr Richardson made a personal observation some of the area might be "downzoned". Mr Haddad told him planning teams had been speaking to the council.

Mr Haddad is expected to face pressure when he reappears at the parliamentary inquiry into the McGurk affair on Monday. Yesterday the *Herald* revealed accusations that he misled Parliament at his last appearance, something Mr Haddad denies.

Mr Haddad had said on September 29 that a submission to the inquiry from the planning department was "not redrafted", but documents made public in the Call for Papers show it clearly was, after it was emailed to his office.

The Opposition Leader, Barry O'Farrell, asked if Mr Haddad would be sacked if the Coalition was in power, said: "All of those issues will await government."

A spokesman for Mr Haddad said three proposals Mr Richardson raised, including Badgerys Creek, Macarthur South and Sanctuary Villages, had "been rejected".

"In all cases ... decisions on these proposals have or will be made on the basis of their merits, not on the basis of who was lobbying for them."

Minnelli's trademark effervescence shines through



A stark contrast with the tabloid horror stories ... Liza Minnelli facing the media yesterday. "I choose songs that mean something to me, songs that talk to people." Photo: Kate Geraghty

Bryce Hallett

THE "girl with an int'resting face", as the showman Peter Allen wrote of his American wife Liza Minnelli in *Tentorfield Saddler*, fronted the Sydney media yesterday after an absence of 20 years. It was a class act.

The entertainer may no longer be the girl of Allen's autobiographical song—they married in 1967, divorced seven years later and remained friends until his death in 1992—but she still has the

trademark effervescence that has made her as famous as her legendary mother Judy Garland. Minnelli, 63, performs at the Opera House this week in her first Australian trip since touring with Sammy Davis Jr and Frank Sinatra. She first came to Sydney with Allen, playing Chequers nightclub in the 1960s. On later visits she saw the Opera House at different stages of construction, little knowing she would one day grace the Concert Hall stage. "I choose songs that mean

something to me, songs that talk to people rather than just singing into space under a spotlight." Minnelli's generosity and warmth starkly contrast with the tabloid horror stories about her battles with alcohol and drug addiction, personal failures and disastrous marriages. In 2000, she was incapacitated by viral encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. She was unable to walk or talk. Her doctor said recovery was unlikely. "I said 'Nah!' I chose not to believe him.

I went back to work and haven't stopped working ... My advice to younger artists is [to] believe in what you're doing and do what you believe in." Aside from her near-mythical lineage, Minnelli shot to fame playing Sally Bowles in the 1972 film *Cabaret*. She won an Academy Award for best actress. "It was so much fun. Here we were, can you imagine, making a musical in Germany about the Nazis yet no one seemed to notice so we got away with it. No

one really knew what we were doing ... I just adored it." Minnelli's whirlwind delivery can be traced to her godmother Kay Thompson. She had been Garland's vocal coach at MGM and sang in nightclubs in the late 1940s and early '50s. "I was two years old when I was taken to see Kay perform," Minnelli says. "She was an all-rounder and influenced all of us." Minnelli's triumphant return to the New York stage last year echoed the sentiments of theatre

critic Ben Brantley a decade earlier when she took over from Julie Andrews in *Victor/Victoria* on Broadway. "Her every appearance is perceived as a victory of showbusiness stamina over psychic frailty ... Minnelli asks for love so nakedly and earnestly, it seems downright vicious not to respond." Minnelli performs at the Opera House on Friday and Saturday, and at the Entertainment Centre on November 2.

STC's general manager bids company adieu

Clare Morgan
ARTS EDITOR

THE Sydney Theatre Company's general manager, Rob Brookman, is to leave the company after more than a decade.

After mulling over his future for the past few months, Mr Brookman announced yesterday that he would leave next May.

With Andrew Upton and Cate Blanchett settled in as co-artistic directors, the 2010 season bedded down and the expectation of a healthy profit this year—a turn-

around from the previous year's loss—the time was right, he said.

"Since I started in 1999 the company has pretty much doubled in size, at least from a financial point of view. I like to think the breadth and sophistication of what we are offering, our relationships internationally, the developmental and educational work we do is all excellent.

"That's anyone's ambition when they take on a job like this, so there is a degree of satisfaction in being able to say it's in good shape."

Once he leaves, the first mission for the STC's longest-serving general manager will be to take a break.

"I've been working non-stop for 30 years, so initially I think a month or two to actually live a life that has no work expectations is on the cards. A bit of gardening, lots of reading, many movies to catch up on—the kind of thing anyone fantasises about.

"After that I'm certainly not lost to the arts. I'd love to find a way to combine my interests in the arts and the environment."

But he won't be sending his CV anywhere. "I think I'll probably determine my own course rather than jumping at jobs that may be around. Before I came to the STC I was running my own company, Arts Projects Australia, and I would probably prefer to return to dreaming up productions, projects, festivals, rather than working for a company."

Mr Upton and Mrs Blanchett said Mr Brookman's perspective had been invaluable, along with his wisdom, strength, commitment, generosity and counsel.

Stephen Armstrong, a former associate director at the STC who is the executive producer of Malthouse Theatre in Melbourne, described Mr Brookman as "da man".

"There's a whole bunch of us who would not be doing what we are now if we hadn't had his counsel, his experience and his love," he said.

The STC's chairman, Ian Darling, said Mr Brookman would be extremely difficult to replace. The search for a new general manager will begin soon.



Curtain call ... Brookman.

Exclusive surf club reels in its neighbour

Jonathan Chancellor
PROPERTY EDITOR

THE exclusive Palm Beach Surf Life Saving Club, the epicentre of Sydney's northern beaches social entertaining during the summer high season, splashed out \$3,325,000 on a neighbouring residential property at auction yesterday.

The 943-square-metre purchase takes the club's compound to nine blocks totalling one hectare along the frangipani-fringed Ocean Road beachfront. The auction bidding opened at \$2.5 million and its Raine & Horne selling agent, Glenn Lee, called the property on the market at \$2.8 million.

The 88-year-old club faced strong competition from four bidders after the price surpassed the reserve price.



Grand designs ... the surf club will cover one hectare. Photo: Tim Mooney

The newly elected club president, David Chrystal, was among the seven registered bidders.

The buying instructions came from a meeting of the club's membership on Sunday, which voted overwhelmingly in favour of securing the property. The purchase is expected to be

funded partly by the surf's club two associated social clubs—the men's-only Cabbage Tree Club and the women's Pacific Club—which have financially supported the surf club for decades. The Cabbage Tree Club had \$703,000 in retained profits in April, up from \$588,000 a year earlier.

The surf club took a \$160,000 mortgage from Westpac in 2004. Still retaining its 1960s Marion Hall Best decor, the four-bedroom weatherboard house Lavengro was built in 1958 on the corner of Florida Road and Ocean Place.

It last sold for \$10,000 in 1963, by Dr Charles Salisbury to the Gartner family. He had first visited the peninsula in the early 1920s.

The club began with just a £93 three-seater double-ender surf boat, and a six-square-metre wooden shed.

The purchase is the first since 1955, when the club spent \$1575 on an adjoining Florida Road vacant lot hoping it would become extra car parking.

The club's heritage-listed headquarters, Powhohokah, was bought in 1954 for £16,000 and is

the fifth building to have housed the club since its inception. It was one of the first reinforced concrete private residences in Australia when built by the civil engineer Thomas Peters.

The owners of the pioneer sandstone cottages who formed the nucleus of the club's membership in the 1920s included members of the Bullmore, Curlew, Raine, Hattersley and Hordern families.

They had bought their building blocks after marketing campaigns suggesting Palm Beach was one of "the safest beaches in Australia".

The accountant Sam Burton Taylor, the stockbroker Doug Grice, the lawyer Tony Bancroft, the manufacturer Shane Oxenham and the businessman John Studly have been some of the club's leaders in recent years.

Three men may have information about McGurk murder, say police

Kate McClymont

HOMICIDE investigators have made public a description of three men they believe may have valuable information about the murder of Michael McGurk.

About 6.30pm on September 3 the standover man and money-lender, 45, was shot at point blank range outside his Cranbrook Avenue home, Cremorne.

Police believe there were three men in the area before the killing who may have information that could help with investigations.

Two of the men, who were wearing business suits, were seen about the time of the shooting. They were 50 metres from the crime scene walking on the footpath towards Military Road. The first man is described as

being of white, European appearance, about 183 centimetres tall, medium build, with a broad nose. The second man is also of white, European appear-

ance, about 188 centimetres tall, of medium build and with dark, collar-length hair. Detectives are also eager to speak to a man of Asian appearance who was seen across the road from Mr McGurk's house between 1pm and 3pm on the day of the murder. Police have

described this man as being about 30 years old, about 173 centimetres tall, of medium build, with short dark hair and a round face.

He was wearing a dark blue or black zip-up jacket, khaki shorts and work boots.

The acting commander of the Homicide Squad, Detective Superintendent Dennis Bray, said anyone with information about the murder should contact Strike Force Narrunga detectives via Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

The strike force, which is investigating the circumstances surrounding Mr McGurk's murder, consists of detectives from the State Crime Command's Homicide Squad and Harbour-side Local Area Command.

Australian Government
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND NUMERACY PROGRAM SERVICES
RELEASE OF OVERVIEW PAPER

The Australian Government, through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, has released an Overview Paper on Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) service delivery.

The Overview Paper seeks to inform potential tenderers of proposed changes to the LLNP and arrangements for the next contract round. The new contract period to provide LLNP services is 2010-2013 and will commence on 1 July 2010.

Visit www.deewr.gov.au/llnp for a copy of the Overview Paper.

PRODUCT SAFETY RECALL

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