

Wednesday, August 18, 2010

Work to commence at Sandon Point

The NSW Department of Planning has approved changes to the conditions of the Sandon Point residential subdivision which will allow work to begin on the site.

This follows an original approval which was assessed by the Department of Planning, reviewed by the independent Planning Assessment Commission, approved by the Minister for Planning and upheld by the NSW Land and Environment Court.

The Department's Development Assessment Deputy Director-General Richard Pearson said the modification application was approved following consultation with local Aboriginal groups, Wollongong City Council and the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW).

Some of the existing conditions in regard to Aboriginal heritage required amendment.

This is because the conditions were not clear about who had the ultimate authority to decide if Aboriginal heritage had been adequately addressed.

"One of the original conditions handed over decision-making on artefacts to four different Aboriginal groups and required them to agree on a course of action," he said.

"In doing this, it didn't specifically allow the groups to enter the site to inspect the artefacts, nor deal with how disagreements between the groups might be resolved.

"Our new approach ensures these four groups – along with the Sandon Point tent embassy – are able to inspect the site and collect materials and perform a continuing important role in this site's progression."

The amended approval for the subdivision still provides substantial protection for Aboriginal artefacts and is supported by DECCW, the Government's agency responsible for Aboriginal heritage.

Mr Pearson said the amended conditions provide a far more workable solution for both the developer and Aboriginal community groups.

Media unit contact: Mark Skelsey (02) 9228 6275 or 0439 931 098