

News  Business



# Beach land owners vow to fight for fair compensation

By David Braithwaite

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OWNERS of land along the Wellington coast which has been deemed inappropriate for development have not ruled out legal action following a vote by Wellington Shire councillors to make planning restrictions permanent.

Before the council vote, angry landowners urged council to establish a public acquisition overlay, which they claim would provide fair compensation for their land.

Ninety Mile Beach Property Rights Group member Gae Messina said if council and the community wanted the amendment to go ahead, they needed to be prepared to pay fair compensation.

"Our members ask for compensation equal in value to blocks in the Golden Beach node, which at present have similar zoning restrictions," she said.

"There are ways of achieving fair compensation to block owners; council should be seeking more funds from the State Government.

"The pay-outs could be staged over a four-year period as to spread the load on council.

"Putting your head in the sand and passing C71 because it's too hard will not make this problem go away.

"Council resources will be tied up in correspondence and litigation for years to come if the right decision is not taken."

Mrs Messina said there were other parts of the coasts threatened by sea level rise which could be developed, while their land was 14 metres above sea level.

"Our blocks were subdivided with local council and State Government approvals.

"Any fault lies with the authority, not the owner and the ratepayer," she said.

Another rights group member, Robert Grech, said owners were prepared to negotiate compensation, but not to surrender their land for an "insulting amount" of \$1500.

"We are not going away; this problem will only escalate from now on, Mr Grech said.

"We will go wide, exposing and shaming this council to eternity.

"Remember, we have nothing to lose.

"The shire has robbed us of thousands of dollars over 40 years."

From 1954 about 11,800 lots were created along the Ninety Mile Beach between Paradise Beach and The Honeysuckles in areas such as Golden Beach, Flamingo Beach, The Honeysuckles and Glomar Beach.

The lots were sold in the 1950s and 1960s through vigorous marketing campaigns including the unscrupulous targeting of immigrants, but during the 1970s it became apparent the land was unsuitable for development because of issues such as eroding coastal soils, poor conditions for effluent disposal and high quality vegetation and landscape.

In the late 1970s, the State Government and the then Rosedale Shire Council implemented interim planning controls to restrict development.

As part of the measures, lots could only be built on if restructured from blocks of four individual lots into one.

About 5600 lots remain unrestructured.

In 2007, Wellington Shire Council adopted a strategy for development to be contained within established settlement areas, with a moratorium on development introduced into the Wellington Planning Scheme.

Council also introduced a voluntary assistance scheme.

**For more read Friday's Gippsland Times.**

**Beach building blocked**

**(<http://www.gippslandtimes.com.au/story/1347898/beach-building-blocked/?cs=1450>)**