

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 14th December 2011

Anger at Henley Beach runs deep

Developer tries to water down beachside engineering failure.

Embattled developer Richard Antunes is again making waves at Henley Beach for all the wrong reasons. Builders struck groundwater during construction of his previous Bajú and H2O developments. As a result, over 64,000 litres of groundwater needs to be pumped onto the once pristine beach everyday.

Mr Antunes is blaming Council for the failure. But residents and visitors at the popular beachside location simply want the problem fixed. The biggest concern is that the reduction of Henley's sensitive water table could soon affect ground stability.

Western Adelaide Coastal Residents' Association (WACRA) President Jim Douglas said, "Residents have a right to be anxious. The hydrology and salinity issues could be very substantial. The development site is surrounded by State and Local Heritage buildings, as well as many homes that are over 100 years old. They won't survive this kind of beating without serious damage."

"At various times, the developer, architect, Council and ERD have each told people these developments will be okay. If that's really the case then they should start putting it in writing and take full responsibility if and when the damage occurs."

"Some residents have only just repaired the damage made to their homes by the last round of development, in highly unsympathetic circumstances - and that's putting it mildly. For many, this is the last straw. Some families have lived here for years but are now selling up and moving away. It's really very sad." said Mr Douglas.

Steadfast developer pushes ahead.

In spite of the controversy, Mr Antunes appears committed to developing the remainder of the site. Plans for an even bigger set of high-rise buildings next door will require equally concerning undercroft car parking excavation.

Those plans were recently rejected by the City of Charles Sturt Development Assessment Panel but Mr Antunes is expected to appeal the decision. Many hope that Mr Antunes has listened to concerns and will refrain from lodging an appeal through the Environment, Resources and Development Court (ERD). If Mr Antunes does appeal, residents are asking that he takes into account groundwater issues, plus the character and culture of this unique beachside suburb.

"We don't yet fully understand the impact that the completed developments will have on the local area. But we do know that leaching thousands of litres of groundwater on to the beach is not good engineering practice. A solution must be found. WACRA is calling on the Council to insist that Mr Antunes obtains a baseline measure of the water table immediately. We will also fight to ensure that another two levels of undercroft carparking does not happen. But most importantly, we need to know who is liable for this irresponsible engineering blunder."

"Henley Beach should be a centerpiece of planning excellence. The community has made it clear that it wants responsible and sustainable development at Henley Beach. This follows numerous reviews of Henley Square, a recent public meeting in the Henley Town Hall with hundreds in attendance, and a petition signed by almost 1,700 residents," said Mr Douglas.

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