

Media Release

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Taylor's Mistake — the mediation and the future

The Taylor's Mistake Association, the body representing bach owners in the cove, has broken its hitherto 'silence' on some issues to correct what it sees as misconceptions on the future of the area.

"We have till now kept out of the public debate, mostly in correspondence to newspapers, as we felt it should properly be discussed at official level," says Mr Maurie Bell, one of the TMA's representatives on the mediation committee which decided the future of baches at Taylor's Mistake, Hobsons Bay and Boulder Bay.

"But some of the publicity doesn't accurately or fully reflect the facts. Also, not many seem to be aware that the 'solution' to the baches was sorted out over a very long period.

"The city council, the Canterbury Regional Council, the Department of Conservation and the Taylor's Mistake Association entered into mediation. The Taylor's Mistake Ratepayers' Association was invited, several times, to be party to this mediation but refused."

Mr Bell says the Historic Places trust, the Taylor's Mistake Surf Lifesaving Club, engineers and lawyers were all consulted or had input. "We even checked there was no claim under the Treaty of Waitangi," says Mr Bell.

"There was also a public meeting, and the chairwoman was an independent, professional mediator, from the Centre for Resolving Environmental Disputes at Lincoln University."

Mr Bell says opponents of the baches have frequently pointed to bach owners in 1976 signing leases undertaking to vacate or remove the baches within 10 years.

"We made clear at the time those leases were signed under duress, and since 1976, the legal interpretation has changed; society has changed. The Resource Management Act encourages people to sort out things now with mediation. We thus came to mediation."

Joan
Press "story" not what we wanted. These are our words and we wanted them as they stand to be published.
Why do Press go to opposition when we make a statement but not the other way around?
Maurie B

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On charges of 'privatisation' of public land, Mr Bell says such fears or charges are ill-founded.

"There was some concern and confusion about part of Rotten Row encroaching on the 'Queen's Chain'," says Mr Bell. "Pegs placed and records from the 19th century have been lost or just disappeared. But the Mean High Water [the Queens' Chain] has now been formally re-established and most of the area under most discussion, the Row, is in fact above the Queen's Chain.

"Some of the Row, the most south-eastern part, is in the Queen's Chain, and those five baches will be demolished, along with eight on the other side of the bay and one at Hobsons Bay.

"These baches are not only on the Queen's Chain but could be regarded as inhibiting public access and use of the area. All of them are allowed to be relocated on Taylor's Mistake Association land, behind the Row. But all those baches will be on a single title."

And Mr Bell is at pains to point out that the Row itself, which will be down to 14 baches after demolition, comprises just .24ha. "And people owning land and a bach there is no different to people owning land in any other suburb of Christchurch."

Private land.

The Taylor's Mistake Association owns 70.44ha of land at Taylor's Mistake, virtually the whole hillside above the Row up to the Summit Road and round above Taylor's Mistake Road. This is to be gifted to the city for use as a recreational reserve, "effectively an extension of the Godley Farm Park," says Mr Bell.

"We originally purchased that land to relocate from the Row and the other end of the bay, but when we went to a planning hearing, everyone said it was too valuable an asset and should remain a reserve. We were not allowed to build on our own land!

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"If you like, we bought it so we could meet the council's wishes, but the mediation committee, taking into account the historic significance of the baches, their social contribution and the character of the bay, decided the Row was the most satisfactory site."

If the mediated proposals are adopted, the whole area — from the front of the Row up to the Summit Road and round above Taylor's Mistake Road — will be subject to a management plan.

"That land is presently held in a Trust, placed there because of the state of flux surrounding the whole issue, and this will be waived and the land gifted in perpetuity to the city.

"And the management plan will ensure the public has free and unimpeded access to all parts of the bay," says Mr Bell.

"For example, one would expect signposting and some upgrading of access to the historic 'Pilgrim's Track', the walkway to Godley Head. Another effect would be to extend that track west up the valley, an area that is presently private land, our land, but which is becoming increasingly more popular for recreational use.

"The management plan is vital to the maintenance of the character of the bay," says Mr Bell. "It will allay fears that any unsuitable or inappropriate growth could take place — high rises, commercial developments and the like.

"The whole of the bach area, for example, is limited to single-storey building, no higher than 4.5m, floor areas no greater than 50m²."

Mr Bell says the Row has occupied most attention, but he points out baches on the Queen's Chain at Boulder Bay and Hobsons Bay — "less accessible and visible" — are located on Historic Esplanade Reserve and will be leased back to their occupants at a market rental.

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"We have avoided becoming emotional about the whole issue," says Mr Bell, "but one charge that does annoy us is that of being squatters.

"We are not squatters. We have had building permits issued, rate demands issued, and whenever we have been asked to pay any dues or fees, assessed and sought by successive councils, they have been met.

"That is hardly the action of squatters."

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This Media Release has been issued by the Taylor's Mistake Association, and with its authority.

Further information sought by the media is available from Mr Maurice Bell, ph. 338-3775.