



ONE BERRIMA Update 21 November 2024

In the Southern Highlands Express an article was released today about the Berrima Gaol. ONE BERRIMA was asked to provide information for this article as part of our community communication commitment. A key part of our position is communicating facts, not emotional opinions nor speculation.

Today there was also a newsletter released under the name Heritage Matters (HM) and we have identified a number of falsehoods about how ONE BERRIMA was formed, our position and approach to the goal redevelopment.

ONE BERRIMA was a name change from Berrima Gaol Community Group (BGCG) as it was easier to promote and reflected more alignment to what we represent a broader community approach to matters affecting Berrima. Our recent involvement in Schmokin petition of 3,850 support signatures is an example where we reached out to our 850 social media and website contacts. The name change was also well publicized through our ONE BERRIMA social media and website.

Initially BGCG group was formed off the back of a WSC meeting about the Berrima Gaol SEARs report where I spoke about transparency and community engagement and thereafter two 'whole of community' meetings, which I chaired. The initial BGCG group consisted of primarily property developers, a resident who had experience in journalism and me. A couple dropped out before we even got started. Through time as new group members joined, we also had resignations either due to lack of time commitment or concerns over conflicts of interest.

ONE BERRIMA remains committed to facts. So, to correct HM, as far as we are aware and advised by BlueSox everyone has seen the same concept plan, including the residents recently engaged regarding site surveys. This was the plan utilised at the Council-led UDIA meeting conducted some months back. The developer has advised the only amendments to that concept plan were landscaping related, focusing on the change to Australian natives in the drawings as they exist. So right now, we, like all other residents, are waiting for definitive design drawings and landscaping plans to assess the fit with village context. We are simply not willing to say no development, we are preparing to engage to shape sympathetic development including conservation of the riverbank riparian zone.

We are not pro the developer, and we have made this perfectly clear to them, WSC and The State Authorities. We are a community conduit and pro the future of Berrima village and sustainable maintenance of its key historic features. As we have done with Schmokin our approach is through transparency and community engagement, to help define the best outcome the redevelopment will provide for our town.

Important to note that HM in their flyer has made no mention of the crucial role the State Government nor the Independent Design Assessment process which underpins the entire State Significant Development process. Nor has HM made any direct contact with the developer to confirm their assumptions.

Duncan McDonald
(on behalf of ONE BERRIMA)

ONE BERRIMA working group: Bob Rodgers, Megan Moore, Kathryn McDonald, Doug Graham, Bob Kemmis, Duncan McDonald