

## Fight to save Sunvale for a park

Monday, 06 July 2009

Battle-lines have been drawn as residents go toe-to-toe with Brimbank Council over its attempted Community Open Space Land Grab. The disputed territory includes Errington Reserve in St Albans and Sunvale Primary School in Sunshine.

Brimbank Council has announced that it plans to take over Errington Reserve in St Albans to build a "Civic Centre," and in the process will go further into debt and kick both the St Albans Football Club and St Albans Cricket Club off their home ground.

Errington Reserve was donated as Community Open Space, but pro-developer Brimbank Council CEO Nick Foa is not only planning to take the land off the community - he is also planning to sell off land in Sunshine and Keilor for high-density housing experiments. The move is backed by Labor Unity-aligned Mayor, Troy Atanasovski. It is no surprise that Foa and Atanasovski's proposal is in line with the Labor Government's proposal to flood our suburbs with low-cost, high-rise housing.

Meanwhile, in Sunshine, the soon to be vacated Sunvale Primary School which is already used by the local community as a park out of school hours, is being offered to developers for more high-density housing by Brimbank CEO Nick Foa. Brimbank Council's own reports show that Sunshine is badly under-resourced when it comes to community open space, but rather than taking a once in a lifetime chance to advocate for parkland - Foa has elected to put further strain on struggling infrastructure by deciding that the site will be used to house many hundreds more residents.

Foa has not bothered to ask the community what it wants. In fact, Foa rarely bothers to ask the community what it wants, despite his salary being paid by ratepayers of Brimbank. Who Does the Brimbank CEO work for?

Sunvale Primary School was forced to "merge" with two other schools because it has been run into the ground by successive Governments - but just because it is closing down, doesn't mean the community should lose it. The site is perfect for a community park, has buildings which can be adapted for community meeting space and a youth development centre and it is adjacent to the Sunshine Leisure Centre. Imagine that! A real community and youth-oriented space in the centre of Sunshine.

Sunvale Primary School is Community Space. Our kids are educated there; they play there during school hours and come back with kids from other schools to play late in the afternoon and on weekends. Foa's decision to hand Community Space to developers is short-sighted and not in the community's interest, so why is he doing it?

Where is the report that recommends Sunvale be given to developers? Why did Nick Foa write to the Government during the council's caretaker period last year and tell them that the Sunvale should become another high-density housing experiment? Why is Foa ignoring the council's own reports that say Sunshine is desperately short of open space, in a municipality that has one of the lowest amounts of open space in Melbourne? There are clear links between available open space and health outcomes, and Brimbank has one of the poorest health reports in Victoria. Get the picture?

Seeing as Nick Foa refuses to ask the community what it wants, SunRRA has decided to establish an Alternate Council that will meet on July 28th. The Alternate Council will ask the people what they want on issues such as Sunvale, Errington Reserve and the planned Civic Centre.

Come and have your say at the Alternative Council meeting, at 7pm on Tuesday the 28th of July outside the Brimbank Council chambers in Sunshine.