

Transcript

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 Compere: **ALAN JONES** Summary ID: **S00031382175**

Item: **JONES SAYS THE IEMMA GOVERNMENT ISN'T AS BAD AS ITS CRITICS MAKE OUT BUT ISN'T AS GOOD AS IT SHOULD BE. HE SAYS ONE OF THE CENTRAL PROBLEMS IS THE HAUNTING FIGURE OF FRANK SARTOR, NSW MINISTER FOR PLANNING, SAYING HE WANTS TO ACCUMULATE POWER FOR HIMSELF AND IS ALIENATING PEOPLE ALL OVER NSW.**

INTERVIEW: NICK CAMPBELL-JONES, COUNCILLOR, WINGECARRIBEE COUNCIL ; STEPHEN AMBROSE, ECOLOGIST

Demographics:	Male 16+	Female 16+	All people	ABs	GBs
	70000	84000	154000	24000	94000

ALAN JONES: With all this conjecture about the Iemma Government whether it's doing a good job or a bad job, in the first place it's nowhere near as bad as its critics make out. And in the second place it's nowhere near as good as it should be. But one of the central problems in all of this nonetheless is the haunting figure of Frank Sartor. He wants to do everything himself. He wants to aggregate power to himself and he alienates pockets of people all over New South Wales who then become anti the Government. This is then reflected in the polls, the polls then become anti Iemma and the mess begins.

The Government would do well to put someone totally objective in charge of the critical portfolio do planning like Kristina Keneally for one, but there aren't many others, and move Sartor as far to the back of the political classroom as you could get him



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and make him face the corner. He is quite simply for the Government a disaster. How many times have I illustrated that on this program?

But here is another story which you won't believe. Of the Government, Mr Sartor, pushing through a development changing legislation to suit himself, presenting a submission full of holes you could drive a truck through. It is a proposal to develop a major shooting range at Hill Top in the southern highlands. It's got nothing to do with the fact that I've got a property in the southern highlands. I simply cannot believe what I have found out.

There's a Hill Top residents action group. It's hired a panel of experts to report on the impact of the development including things like noise, water, soil contamination, flora, fauna, traffic, safety, fires. The Government's submission is a joke and the obvious question to ask is why has this happened because this is a shooting range?

Remember, I talked at length on this program about changes to the law, Sartor's changes. There was no way in the world anyone with half a brain would have passed them, notwithstanding the fact that local government planning is also a mess. Local government admit to that.

That doesn't mean to say that what Sartor was on about had any merit. And yet out of the blue in the middle of the night, 2am in the morning, the laws



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were passed. How? With the support of the Shooters Party. Now you're going to have a shooting range which breaks every imaginable rule in the southern highlands. What did Minister Sartor get from the Shooters Party in return for them supporting appalling legislation? Presumably approval for all of this.

From an environmental standpoint the proposed development is about three metres across the road - three metres from a world heritage area. It's quite clear from the submission that the company hired to report on the impact of the development is either really stupid, which they're not because they're an international company, or they must have been directed on the outcome that the Government wanted to achieve and therefore did a shonky report.

The public exhibition period is over. There is so much wrong with the entire submission that there are dozens of example. Now obviously the residents don't want the complex at Hill Top but they're not being listened to by the Government. They've had only one meeting with the Minister for the Environment. The promised material she was going to send them never eventuated. Their letters have gone unanswered. They hired a solicitor, his letter have gone unanswered. Their properties have started to go down in value because of the proposal and they expect the values to drop even further if the proposal gets the green light.



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They're concerned about safety issues as the village has a lot of families and young kids that use the roads and nearby national parks for recreation. But using special legislation Mr Sartor has exercised [sic] - excised - sorry excised 1000 hectares of native bush from a state conservation area and leased it to seven private shooting clubs to develop, The Southern Highlands Regional Shooting Complex. Minister Sartor recently gazetted the area within which lies an E1 zone, the highest conservation category. In other words, of national park equivalent.

Later he stated his intention to downgrade the site, zoning it to E2. All this is just Sartor says, Sartor does. A single 800 metre rifle range has existed there since 1986. Last year the Department of Sport and Recreation submitted and planning application for a new complex with additional facilities and hours of operation, another rifle range, another pistol range, a shotgun range, a club house with amenities, an armoury, new infrastructure including a gravel access road, a generator, water storage, a car park for 75 cars, a complex to operate seven days a week and the army to use the complex at their discretion.

Then in August last year the proposal was added to. An additional rifle and pistol range, an indoor air pistol range, the enlargement of one pistol range to 90 shootings positions, a doubling of car park spaces to 180, expected peak use by 250 shooters, extensive clearing, shooting at night and a six and a



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half metre tall building. The land's currently zoned 1A Rural which prohibits recreational use such as a shooting range but they bypassed the Wingecarribee Council.

Mr Sartor called it a major project of state significance. That gives him control. That made him the consent authority. But the same Mr Sartor, never knowing what his left hand is doing, introduced new planning regulation in July this year which prevented him from approving a development which is already prohibited by the local council zoning. The Hill Top residents action group lawyers pointed this out to Mr Sartor in October last year so on 16 November last year the regulations were amended in the Government Gazette to allow Mr Sartor to still consider any rezoning for a development.

Some of the land borders on the world heritage area. Previously earmarked for Nattai National Park. It is beyond belief this. I've got on the line a Wingecarribee Council Nick Campbell-Jones and a very well respected ecologist Dr Stephen Ambrose. Nick Campbell-Jones, good morning.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Good morning, Alan.

ALAN JONES: Have you been threatened by your opposition to this?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: I had a gentleman ring me up and tell me there was a bullet with my name on it, yeah.

ALAN JONES: That's a fair threat.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Yes.

ALAN JONES: The tests carried out by the company who wrote the report for the Government based their conclusions on three guns being fired once each in daylight.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Yes.

ALAN JONES: But its true, isn't it, the proposed development will see more than 200 guns fired at any one time and the complex will be open at night?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: That's correct.

ALAN JONES: Now what about the traffic?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Well, the traffic thing is one of the - a very large thing that, you know, should be opposed to. I mean, to get there from virtually anywhere you've got through come through a very, very narrow cutting. Now that is the good part. The bad part is when you get anywhere near, and to travel out to the range itself, you're on a very, very ordinary road.

ALAN JONES: It's a goat track. It's full of holes.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Absolutely.

ALAN JONES: Full of holes, and the development will see hundreds of cars using the road and nothing in the proposal addresses the road issue.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Well it's a lovely example of cost shifting isn't it?

ALAN JONES: That's it.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: And the thing is you talked about benefits, the benefits will be to seven gun clubs from the Illawarra or Wollongong. Locals get very little other than to get the joy of paying for the upkeep of the roads.

ALAN JONES: Now, this is Nattai National Park - is being used there on a daily basis. There are bush walkers, there are kids on bikes, there are horse riders and yet the dirt road borders on the national park. And across the road, just across the road, spitting distance, the proposed development.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: And it's just as pristine as the stuff across the road in the national park.

ALAN JONES: And yet there's a constant stream of pedestrian, bike and horse traffic on the road. Nothing's been done to address that.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: That's correct.

ALAN JONES: An accident waiting to happen.

NICK CAMPBELL JONES: Yeah.

ALAN JONES: Dr Stephen Ambrose is on the line. Stay with us Nick. He's a well known and respected ecologist. Stephen, good morning.

STEPHEN AMBROSE: Good morning, Alan.

ALAN JONES: Are you astounded at the complete lack of credibility of the Government's fauna report?

STEPHEN AMBROSE: Yeah, I mean, I think basically what has actually happened is that, as you said, the company is quite well respected internationally but in this particular case I think the report was put together or the surveys were actually conducted by relatively inexperienced people and they really did miss some significant features of the landscape and the ecology of the area.

ALAN JONES: There are a number of threatened species that come under a Commonwealth environment act. Isn't a legislative requirement to take this to the Commonwealth and isn't it true that this hasn't been done?

STEPHEN AMBROSE: Yes, that's true. There are two species of animals in particular that are covered by the Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and if a development or activities has the potential to impact on the status of those types of species then they need to be referred to the Federal Government for approval.

ALAN JONES: And that hasn't been done?

STEPHEN AMBROSE: No, that's right.

ALAN JONES: But because the proposed development is on a hill contamination from bullets, casings and associated materials will run off into the catchment area for the Warragamba Dam.

STEPHEN AMBROSE: Yeah, that's a real risk. I mean, if you've got spent ammunition that's containing lead then because the area is in the water catchment area of the greater Sydney area and because there are some gullies that run through the site, after heavy rains there's a potential that those spent ammunition being washed into the gully areas and further down stream into the water catchment areas.

ALAN JONES: But the water survey in the Government's submission was done once and no water was collected because it was during the drought.

STEPHEN AMBROSE: That's right, absolutely.

ALAN JONES: And they've not come back since the rains have come?

STEPHEN AMBROSE: No, as far as I know.

ALAN JONES: And this is an area of high bush fire risk?

STEPHEN AMBROSE: It is. I mean, it's quite a densely vegetated woodland and it's quite a large area of woodland and, you know, lightning strikes or anything like that...

ALAN JONES: [Interrupts] Well, that happened in Christmas 2001, didn't it?

STEPHEN AMBROSE: Exactly.

ALAN JONES: And there were 30 fire fighting units waiting to save the township. So the environment assessment is totally deficient in assessing bushfire risk and necessary mitigation measures?

STEPHEN AMBROSE: Yes, absolutely.

ALAN JONES: Let's go back to Nick Campbell-Jones. Where are we in all of this? Is Mr Sartor going to ignore everything we've just heard and just go ahead?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Well, every indication suggests that, doesn't it? [indistinct]

ALAN JONES: [Interrupts] So in spite of the impact of the development on the...

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Sorry.

ALAN JONES: Sorry. In spite of the impact of the development on noise, I mean, guns going off all day and night, water, soil contamination, flora and fauna, traffic, safety, fires, the Government submission says yes Mr Sartor go ahead.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: It certainly looks that way.

ALAN JONES: Has the Labor Government done a deal with the Shooters Party?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Well, you would be forgiven for feeling that there is some sort of a political agenda wouldn't you?

ALAN JONES: You've written to the Environment Minister Verity Firth?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Yes.

ALAN JONES: Have the letters gone unanswered?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: I'm not too sure at the moment because they were addressed back to the - you know, the group at Hill Top.



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ALAN JONES: Right, you hired a solicitor though. Have their letters been answered?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: I'm not that committee. They just keep me in the loop at all times.

ALAN JONES: What about the safety issues, though, because the village has got lots of families with young kids that use to roads and the parks?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Look, there's so many different things that fascinate me. I mean, one of them is the SCA. The SCA - Sydney Catchment Authority - who are always so very hard, you know, to match up with any developments that are going on and yet they're noticeable by their silence which really surprises me.

ALAN JONES: Stephen Ambrose, can I just say to you, the land is currently zones 1A Rural which prohibits recreational use such as a shooting range and here is a proposal which is mammoth. An existing 800 metre rifle range, another rifle range, another pistol range, a shotgun range, a club house, an armoury, a complex to operate seven days a week. The army can use it. Then they added in 2007 an additional rifle and pistol range, an indoor air pistol range, the enlargement of one pistol range to 90 shooting positions, a doubling of the car park to 180, expected use by 250 shooters, extensive clearing. Shooting at night, a six and a half metre tall

building, how the hell can that happen on a lump of land of this kind?

STEPHEN AMBROSE: Yeah, it does seem incredible doesn't it? And I simply don't know. I guess from an ecological point of view the concern that I have is that, as you mentioned in your introduction, it's surrounded by the Bargo State Conservation Area and it adjoins Nattai National Park and the Blue Mountains world heritage area.

ALAN JONES: Nick Campbell-Jones, Mr Sartor has made himself a consent authority so your council is bypassed.

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: This council is bypassed. I guess, it's a continuing removal of any sort of powers by local council.

ALAN JONES: So where are we as we speak today?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: Well, we've - at the moment, we're on a very sticky wicket I would suggest because it's quite obvious that Mr Sartor and the Government intend to proceed.

ALAN JONES: Okay, we'll come back to you. Thank you for your time Nick Campbell-Jones, a councillor. So you've got a bullet. What did the bullet say?

NICK CAMPBELL-JONES: A fellow rang me up and said you're opposing this development, there's a bullet with your name on it.

ALAN JONES: Amazing stuff. Dr Stephen Ambrose, thank you for your time.

STEPHEN AMBROSE: Thanks Alan.

ALAN JONES: It is beyond belief, hey? But when you're dealing with Frank Sartor, anything can happen. If Morris Iemma is to move back to credible leadership, which he can easily offer, Mr Sartor has to go.

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