

Warren Halloran.

I first met Warren Halloran in 1969. I had arrived in Sydney in 1960 to take up an appointment as a Lecturer in Town and Country Planning at the University of Sydney. I was encouraged to offer lectures to organisations outside the University through the University Extension Board. One of the lectures that I offered was entitled 'The Improvement of Country Towns'. This lecture proved to be very popular and I was invited to give this lecture in many parts of New South Wales, notably Moree, Tamworth, Yass, Cowra, Forbes and Canowindra. Giving these lectures gave me wonderful insights into the economy of regional New South Wales and the roots of the culture of Australia at that time. Many wanted me to return again and again, often generating ideas that could be implemented by local Councils.

So, by the time I met Warren I had lost my 'new chum' image, had a good understanding of the Australian ethos with respect to 'town planning' and had achieved some recognition as an authority on town planning.

At our first meeting Warren wanted to talk about the future of Vincentia. The main problem from his point of view was that the comparative freedom that his father enjoyed in getting subdivisions approved was no longer possible. Many of his father's subdivisions were approved without formed roads, without basic services such as water supply and sewerage and with no community facilities.

Culburra Beach is a good example of such a subdivision; it was established circa 1920 and was barely developed by 1950.

After World War 2 new Town Planning legislation had been introduced which gave Councils much greater power to control the development process. In the case of Vincentia there was ample land available but it was not all suitable for development and the rate of population growth did not support significant areas being re-zoned for new urban development.

I prepared a 'Master Plan' for an enlarged Vincentia and, over several years, got limited approvals for some new subdivisions adjacent to the golf course and, after a long struggle, adjoining Blenheim Beach.

Initially I was totally unaware of the scale of land holdings under Warren's control, I gradually became aware of the vastness of these holdings as I was asked to explore the town planning potential of lands around Jervis Bay, Sussex Inlet, Queanbeyan, Jerrabomberra, Shellharbour, Gorokan, Warners Vale, Nelsons Bay, Port Stephens and Coffs Harbour, in all amounting to many thousands of hectares. Warren achieved significant success with developments at Queanbeyan, Jerrabomberra, Gorokan and Warners Bay whilst other lands were sold 'en-globo' and developed by other companies; for example, Shellharbour, Coffs Harbour, Vincentia and Nelsons Bay. Conversely some places such as Culburra Beach, for which Warren had a strong affection, remained under his control and proved to be very difficult to get approval for further urban development.,

There is both an advantage and disadvantage in holding vast areas of land. This became obvious in the mid-1970's when there was a proposal to build a major steelworks equivalent in size to the one at Port Kembla in Jervis Bay. Everyone except Warren got very excited by

the prospect. Warren owned all the key land required for both the steelworks and the associated urban development. Warren understood the strategic significance of his land to the success of the project. The proponents put great pressure on Warren to sell his land holdings supposedly to enable the project to go ahead. Warren understood that, despite all the hype associated with the project, there was no certainty that the project would proceed. He held his ground. I was called in by the proponent in an attempt to persuade me to persuade Warren to sell. I knew that Warren was well aware of the strength of his position and I reported this to the proponents. I was then subjected to a barrage of pressure, emphasising Warren's unwillingness to support the economic development of the State, referring to him as a 'land miser'. I knew he would not budge and said so.

When I reported back to Warren he simply shrugged it all off. The project never went ahead and most of the land was subsequently compulsorily acquired for Jervis Bay National Park.

Warren had a long view of urban development and settlement. He had a keen sense of history and we had many a discussion about urban development. He had an incredible knowledge of the history of urban development in Australia and an intimate knowledge of how the Halloran developments fitted into that history. It is this characteristic that underlies his affection for Culburra Beach. The initial plan, laid out by his father 100 years ago, has a strong and instantly recognisable form. Indeed, Culburra Beach has the strongest form of all the towns and places established by the Halloran family. Warren was very supportive of the many town planning proposals developed for the expansion of Culburra, seeing them as one way of fulfilling the Halloran vision for Culburra Beach.

Around 2005, just as I was retiring from the University of Sydney, I received a letter from Warren requesting my assistance in a contentious town planning matter. That matter was the expansion of Culburra Beach, a matter that persists to the present day. His intimate and precise knowledge of Culburra came to the fore when I was commenting on a European Heritage Study of the adjoining lands. The Consultant had identified a small concrete bunker discovered in the middle of a large hillside paddock as a storage for milk churns; it was assessed as having no heritage significance. I considered the conclusion that it was a storage place for milk churns to be most unlikely because even my limited understanding of farming practices extended to the awareness that the uplands were not used for grazing milkers. Warren made no comment but a few weeks later he gently slid a copy of a document across his desk to me. I looked at it and smiled at Warren; it was a note from his father asking that a fire-proof concrete bunker be constructed underneath an existing dwelling (all trace of which no longer exists) for the purpose of storing his plans. In the context of the Halloran legacy I considered this bunker to be of considerable heritage significance.

Over the intervening years I became aware that Warren was becoming hampered by his declining health. Although not familiar with the details of his personal circumstances I was concerned that he was becoming increasingly detached from the management of the Halloran legacy. This became of such concern to me that I decided to write a letter to him outlining what I saw as a problem and making suggestions as to what I considered were appropriate actions to take. Almost the next day I received a call asking me to go in and see him. I thought 'Oh dear – I have overstepped the mark'; I thought I should get in early by apologising for my

impertinence in assuming that he would listen to my advice. So that was my approach when we met a couple of days later. But before I had time to sit down and start my apology he stopped me and said thank-you for sending him the letter; he said it was the best thing that had happened to him for some time. I was both surprised and gratified by his response.

Inter alia, there were two principal recommendations; one was that he put all his lands in the hands of a Trust with certain suggestions as to who might be appropriate Trustees; and the second was to re-iterate a suggestion that I had put to him on several previous occasions which was to make a donation to the University of Sydney to establish a Chair to be named in honour of his father, Henry Halloran. I am told that Warren carried this letter around with him for several months as both recommendations were put in place.

With regard to the second recommendation, it was a couple of months later when I was called in to discuss 'the University thing'. When I arrived Warren was there with his accountant. We sat down and the first question fired at me was 'How much does the University want?' Well I was somewhat thrown at that point, but remembered someone saying a named chair was about \$2.5-3.0 million. So that was the figure I stated with considerable uncertainty. But back came the response from his accountant 'well you cannot do much with that; surely you would want 5 million, 10 million or even 15 million if you want to do anything worthwhile'. Well I stumbled around and we discussed what the University would like to do and I talked about a research centre emphasising research into town planning policies such as infrastructure funding and affordable social housing. The meeting ended somewhat inconclusively with a typical Warren comment - 'well you had better go and talk to the Vice-Chancellor then'.

In the ensuing months the proposal to formulate the objectives of and to establish 'The Henry Halloran Trust' within the University of Sydney gradually hardened up. I took Warren up to see the Vice Chancellor on several occasions. On one memorable visit we were taken into the archives of Fisher Library where the staff had put on display a number of items related to his father. Warren was fascinated by this material, much of which was new to him. Then, as I was driving him to a later meeting, he had a long scroll tied up with ribbon with him. Arriving at the V-C's office, Warren still carrying his scroll, we sat down exchanged pleasantries and WH handed over a cheque. Then in characteristic fashion he handed the scroll to the V-C saying 'this is a present for you'. Ribbons untied, the V-C opened up the scroll to reveal a plan of part of the site of the University before it was a university; I guess the plan was drawn up about 1845. The V-C was delighted and I am pleased to say that it is now beautifully framed and occupies pride of place in his reception room. A fitting tribute to Warren's generosity.

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What I can now say is that, 12 years later, the 'The Henry Halloran Trust' funds a significant research program, has achieved a world-wide reputation for its publications and has strong community and government support for its Festival of Urbanism, now run jointly with Monash University and held concurrently in Sydney and Melbourne.. One of its current research projects for which we have high hopes focuses on Indigenous housing; in addition the Director of the Trust, Professor Peter Phibbs, is running a special program on town planning for

Aboriginal Land Councils. Much of the success of the Trust can be attributed to the untiring efforts of the Director, Professor Peter Phibbs.

Finally, I think it appropriate to talk about Culburra Beach. In nominating the Culburra Beach community as one of the beneficiaries of the Trust, Warren clearly indicated his affection for the place.

Those who know Culburra Beach may be familiar with the Moon-gate, certainly fashioned by Henry Halloran, located seemingly arbitrarily on Penguin Head Road. The Moon-gate is a distinguishing element of the streetscape of Culburra Beach. But why is it located where it is? The reason is that the original guest-house built by Henry Halloran was located on this site. And from this site you get the very best, indeed the outstanding view of Culburra Beach, looking north past Crookhaven Heads to Gerringong and the Saddleback range. This was Henry's selling point, passing through the Moon-gate to reveal the unfolding panorama of Culburra Beach. A few years back I outlined to Warren why this feature was so significant and suggested he consider acquiring the site and opening it up to the public. Warren warmed to the idea and took steps to purchase the site. It was not available and so it remains in private ownership. This anecdote is indicative of Warren's affection for Culburra Beach and his willingness to support a high quality of public domain here. In my view it was Warren's aim to achieve an exemplary quality of town planning and environmental design at Culburra Beach.

He wanted Culburra Beach to be a fitting tribute to the Halloran legacy, This idea applies particularly to the expansion of Culburra Beach. In my opinion the challenge is to realise a vision for Culburra Beach that will enhance the Halloran legacy of town planning innovation and foresight.

That is the challenge that we who are left have to take up to honour the legacy of Warren Halloran. It is a challenge that I and others willingly accept.

John Toon

12 January 2020.

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