

Kelly sinks Killalea plan

THE State Government has poured cold water on a proposal by Shellharbour Mayor David Hamilton to keep Killalea in public hands.

Councillor Hamilton's proposal, contained in a letter to NSW Lands Minister Tony Kelly, would involve Shellharbour City Council taking control of the park, which is now earmarked for private development.

Under the plan, funding for park maintenance would be generated from a limited development costing \$2 million, which would be funded by the State Government.

"Killalea needs money to survive," Cr Hamilton said. "It takes about \$250,000 to keep it as it is. Council could not afford that on its own so there would need to be some proposal."

But yesterday, Mr Kelly said ratepayers should not be forced to pay for the park. A spokesman for Mr Kelly said Cr Hamilton would have to prove there was popular support for the plan through a referendum, before it was considered.

"What concerns the minister about the council takeover plan is that to fund ongoing maintenance costs, (Cr Hamilton) wants to slug the ratepayers of Shellharbour, Wollongong and Kiama with a new levy." However, the proposal has received strong support from the South Coast Labour Council.

Yesterday, labour council secretary Arthur Rorris said the plan represented a "credible alternative" to government plans to lease the land to developer Killalea Coastal Investments, made up of Babcock & Brown and construction fund Mariner Land.

"Under the proposal the community takes ownership of its own asset and looks after it. From our perspective we think that this plan has got legs and is the perfect solution.

"If the Government is not prepared to look at this properly, it is saying it was never fair dinkum about looking at ways to update the park and its proposal to sell off the park was all about looking after its mates," Mr Rorris said.

Save Killalea Alliance spokeswoman Sonya McKay wanted to see more details of the plan, "especially given the community is not in favour of developing the park".

Killalea State Park Trust president Ed Gilmore doubted the plan would get off the ground.

"It will never happen," said Mr Gilmore, who questioned the council's motives.

"I'd hate to see the land rezoned and the place covered in houses."