

Tabak takes his turn in eye of the storm

THE SCENE

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FOR a man who has poured millions of dollars into building projects in Wollongong, developer Glen Tabak has a lamentably poor grasp of the planning system.

And a memory that at times threatened the patience of ICAC commissioner Jerrold Cripps and his senior counsel Noel Hemmings.

The hearing room of the ICAC public inquiry is high above the bustling streets of the Sydney CBD - its tranquil environment strangely at odds with the maelstrom the inquiry has unleashed.

Yesterday, it was Mr Tabak's turn in the eye of a storm that in just three days has wreaked political and personal damage that now threatens the future of Wollongong City Council and the Jemma government.

Mr Tabak told the commission the \$31 million Victoria Square project was the fourth and largest development of his company



Not a planner: Wollongong developer Glen Tabak eats lunch during a break in the ICAC inquiry this week. Picture: AAP

Perform developers.

With that sort of business experience the commission might have expected some different answers as it tried to pin down his exact role in the Victoria Square project in the lead up to its approval in October, 2005.

Did he know what a State Environmental Planning Policy number 1 (SEPP1) was? asked Mr Hemmings.

"No," Mr Tabak replied. What about the council's Draft Development Control

Plan 56? "No," the developer replied again.

Council codes and guidelines did not interest him, the company had experts for that, he said.

Did he understand the meaning of development standards?

"No," he said. Nor did he know about the Illawarra Planning Committee which processed objections lodged against an application.

Did he know about the community consultation

process? "No, I have never been to one," Mr Tabak explained.

There was also confusion over FYI, written on an email from Beth Morgan that he could not recall receiving.

"Do you know what FYI means?" was Mr Hemmings' surprised inquiry. "I do now," Mr Tabak replied.

And he wasn't aware that his Victoria Square proposal was 31 storeys high - well in excess of the 11-storey height restriction.

Commissioner Cripps interjected: "Let me understand this, you were involved in a \$31 million project and you didn't apply your mind to it?"

"I'm not a planner," Mr Tabak replied.

While Mr Tabak could not recall a number of emails from Ms Morgan regarding the approval process for Victoria Square, there was clarity in relation to his sexual encounters with her.

Mr Tabak's boyhood friend, and prominent businessman Michael Kollaras had a relatively brief stay in the witness box. But given the circumstances, even an hour can seem a lifetime.

'Scimone wanted hotel threesome'

By LINTON BESSER

A LITANY of serious complaints against Joe Scimone made by former Wollongong City Council staff has come to light.

As many as five women who have worked at the council have raised allegations of harassment and intimidation by Mr Scimone since about 2002.

One woman who made a serious allegation against Mr Scimone - whose connections with powerful Labor figures is well established - was subsequently employed by the NSW public service.

Her husband was also appointed to an important position in a senior minister's office.

The incidents reveal a pattern of behaviour where Mr Scimone ensures there are ramifications for those women who spurn his approaches.

Tanya Rajaratnum detailed her complaint against Scimone in a 2006 statement obtained by Fairfax.

In 2005, as a customer service officer, the statement says Ms Rajaratnum was repeatedly approached and touched by Mr Scimone. After relenting to his

requests for a dinner date, Mr Scimone shocked her by demanding details of her sex life.

"Do you experiment or do you have a threesome or anything like that?" the document alleges he said.

Ms Rajaratnum replied that the question upset her because "I had been sexually assaulted when I was younger and I found his question very intrusive and unpleasant".

Mr Scimone allegedly responded: "I like to have a threesome. You'd be safe in that sort of set up because everyone's in it together."

By the end of that night, after insisting she continue to drink, Mr Scimone allegedly grabbed at Ms Rajaratnum.

"Before I could get into the car he grabbed me, kissed me, stuck his tongue into my mouth and groped me over my clothes touching my breasts," she said.

In Ms Rajaratnum's statement, Mr Scimone is said to have offered \$1000 to both Ms Rajaratnum and another colleague to stay with him in a Sydney hotel.

Ms Rajaratnum could not be contacted yesterday.

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