



ONLINE FOOTY TIPPING

HUGE CASH PRIZES - DETAILS INSIDE



MERCURY

ILLAWARRA

SINCE 1855

Thursday, February 28, 2008

\$1 (incl GST)



SHOCKING CLAIM

Plot to silence Beth

FORMER Wollongong town planner Beth Morgan broke down yesterday as she learned her developer lover urged a conman to intimidate her so she wouldn't speak to investigators with the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

In a secret phone tap played to the ICAC inquiry yesterday, developer Frank Vellar was heard organising for Ray Younan to shut her up.

"I'm gonna ... have a good talk to her once and for all," Mr Younan says.

Mr Vellar replies: "Yeah, but it's gotta be pretty heavy duty."

Commissioner Jerrold Cripps, QC, said the conversation indicated a pre-meditated plan to threaten a witness - "to do something unpleasant to Beth

Morgan". But Mr Vellar rejected the assertion.

In another day of gripping testimony, ICAC heard details of steamy emails sent between Ms Morgan and Mr Vellar.

And ICAC was told Councillor Val Zanotto allegedly leaked council documents to Mr Vellar about a Fairy Meadow site on which the men were planning a joint project.

Mr Vellar was recorded referring to a "little birdie" who had given him the inside running on the land's rezoning. When quizzed whether the informant was Cr Zanotto, Mr Vellar said he could not recall.

Cr Zanotto, who has refused to stand down from Wollongong City Council, is expected to be questioned at ICAC today.



RAY YOUNAN



FRANK VELLAR

ICAC COVERAGE: Pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Picture: HANK van STUIVENBERG

WEATHER: Rain periods, 21 degrees. Page 51

BACK PAGE: Hawks wield the axe +

SECOND DOT

Criminal 'hired to

Developer rejects assertion he planned to 'heavy' his lover

By PAUL McINERNEY

DEVELOPER Frank Vellar was so worried about his lover Beth Morgan cracking under the strain of an ICAC investigation late last year that he asked a criminal to threaten or intimidate her, it was alleged yesterday.

But it was no ordinary criminal he called. It was Ray Younan.

Younan was one of two men who the former Wollongong City planning officer had given \$50,000 in the belief the ICAC investigation into her improper sexual relations with three Wollongong developers, including Mr Vellar, would be dropped.

The commission has issued an arrest warrant for Younan, who is believed to be overseas.

Mr Vellar has repeatedly told the commission of his fear of Younan and his criminal associate Gerald Carroll and that he only made a series of visits to Younan's home and a trip to the Middle East to "string him along".

A number of telephone intercepts by commission investigators played during day eight of the commission's public inquiry in Sydney yesterday, painted a different picture.

In one, Younan talks about he and Mr Vellar meeting a businessman from Brisbane at Sydney airport in relation to a deal with the man's "trillion-dollar company".

Mr Vellar is heard agreeing to put \$5 million of his money into a deal involving



an African oil deal.

He has denied that he ever met the mystery man from Brisbane.

In the same intercept, Mr Vellar asked Younan to call and tell the "other one" (he confirmed the reference was to Ms Morgan yesterday) that she has got to remain very low and not be seen with him.

He would later tell counsel assisting the public inquiry, he did so because he and Ms Morgan were "hot property" because of the investigation into corruption at Wollongong City Council.

The October 13, 2007 call was followed by another from Younan to Mr Vellar about 90 minutes later where Younan confirms he has spoken to Ms Morgan.

Younan: I've spoken to her that ...

Mr Vellar: Yeah happy, happy to you and trying to f.....g make trouble for me at this end here.

When Mr Vellar tells him

he's been getting "dangerous" phone calls from Ms Morgan, Younan then suggests he will send someone down to Wollongong and have a good talk to her "once and for all".

Mr Vellar: Yeah, I think something like that's gotta happen before I go away because I don't want this shit happening when I'm overseas concentrating.

Younan: Done, done definitely. No way I'm going to get you upset when we're overseas, no way.

Mr Vellar: Yeah, but it's gotta be pretty heavy duty.

Younan: Yep, no worries about that.

When confronted with the telephone intercepts, Mr Vellar insisted that it was all part of a strategy designed not to "piss Younan off" and that he was in fear of him.

Asked what heavy duty meant, Mr Vellar said: "Someone had to calm Beth down. She was not coping very well with everything

and I needed her to remain calm."

Mr Vellar was questioned by Commissioner Jerrold Cripps, QC, who said the recording appeared to represent a premeditated plan to threaten an ICAC witness.

"You can understand, can't you, that anyone listening to that conversation would think that you're in cahoots with Mr Younan in order to do something unpleasant to Beth Morgan," Mr Cripps said.

Mr Vellar firmly rejected the proposition.

"Commissioner, there is no intent and I do not confer (sic) with what you just said," he said.

"It was Mr Younan that had control of my life and made threats to my wife and children."

Mr Vellar gave lengthy evidence to the commission early last week, but along with Ms Morgan, he was recalled to the witness box yesterday.

This extra evidence was the final betrayal for Ms Morgan, who had only broken off her sexual relationship with Mr Vellar just a few days before the start of this two-week inquiry.

When it was her turn to take the stand, she told the commission she was shocked by what she had heard and appeared to be visibly upset.

Ms Morgan said she had discussions with Mr Vellar about keeping low, but she had got to the point where she wanted to go to the commission and tell them about the activities of Younan and Carroll.



Hot properties: Council planner Beth Morgan outside the

Quattro would be a dominant landmark on our

By BRETT COX

IT could be the biggest development in Wollongong never built.

Quattro: A \$100 million building so tall and expansive it would stand dominantly above its neighbours.

A jewel in the crown in the development career of Sebvell's Frank Vellar.

At 48m tall, in an area with 11m height restrictions, it would have climbed to the sky. But there are clouds over it now.

The corner of Keira, Flinders and Campbell streets still sits idle as the date Wollongong City Council's approval for the project lapses, August 18, approaches.

But there are other things on Mr Vellar's mind.

He is thinking about the Independent Commission Against Corruption hearing, where Beth Morgan, the former Wollongong

City Council town planner who approved Quattro, admitted she had been in a sexual relationship with Mr Vellar and had received gifts, including cash, from him.

Quattro was always way too big for its proposed location.

Even the NSW Department of Planning had written to the council expressing reservations.

It had a floor space ratio of 4.25 to 1. The permissible ratio for the block was 1.5 to 1. It was four times higher than it should have been.

But on August 18, 2005, Ms Morgan ticked off on the project.

Given there were a number of objections within the community about the project, it was the perfect example of an application which should have been voted on by councillors, ICAC heard. But it never was.

ICAC heard planning rules were changed for the site with the approval of the then general man-

QUATTRO

- 199 two-bedroom, 37 three-bedroom and 40 one-bedroom units
- 5 home offices and two commercial spaces
- 18 retail areas
- 803 car parking spaces

ager Rod Oxley. Ms Morgan gave the green light with outstanding traffic reports yet to be received.

It has since emerged at ICAC that Mr Oxley and Mr Vellar had met for lunch a number of times during the period after the Quattro application had been lodged with the council.

"My recollection is that ... there were general discussions about development matters in Wollongong," Mr Oxley said of the meet-

ings. In his testimony last week, Mr Vellar said he had approached Mr Oxley and asked him to appoint his lover, Ms Morgan, as the assessment officer when he made his development application. He got his way.

He also got his developer contributions for the project reduced by \$84,000, thanks to a decision made by Ms Morgan.

On Tuesday, counsel assisting the commission, Noel Hemmings, QC, honed in on Mr Oxley's relationship with Mr Vellar and questioned him about their lunch dates.

Mr Hemmings: "Was it your understanding that the council's Code of Conduct prohibited staff from meeting with developers outside the council chambers and/or outside office hours?"

Mr Oxley: "It certainly discourages it from occurring, particularly if it was potentially likely to

compromise the position that you held in the council by doing so."

Mr Hemmings: "If you're having meetings and discussions outside the council chambers, that's a lack of transparency, is it not?"

Mr Oxley: "It could be construed that way, yes."

Mr Hemmings: "Did you report those meetings?"

Mr Oxley: "Not that I can recall."

Quattro now sits as a project approved, but whether it will ever be built is in the hands of ICAC. If it finds that Ms Morgan is corrupt, approval for Quattro can be suspended. The approval could then be revoked in court.

Wollongong councillors also resolved on Monday that the Quattro application be reviewed, suggesting the council take the application to the Land and Environment Court if problems are found to have occurred in the approval process.

quote

Yeah, but it's gotta be pretty heavy duty.

- DEVELOPER FRANK VELLAR TO RAY YOUNAN, WHO HAD OFFERED TO VISIT PLANNER BETH MORGAN

