

Fletcher Jones site taken off the market



EXCLUSIVE

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]he Fletcher Jones site has been withdrawn from sale, pending a change to its zoning by the Warrnambool City Council.

Real estate agent **Mark Wilson**, from Wilson Real Estate, told Bluestone that the site had been withdrawn from sale by administrators just after Christmas in anticipation that it would be rezoned from industrial to mixed use.

“There are still ‘for sale’ signs all over the property and I am sure if a cashed-up buyer walked in tomorrow they would not be turned away, but it is not on the market right now,” he said.

Mr Wilson said a change of zoning would hopefully make the site a more attractive prospect for a potential purchaser because it allowed for greater flexibility.

“That is certainly the aim,” he said.

The present Industrial 3 zoning allows for such things as small scale retail, workshops, mini factories and office space.

The derelict site was listed for sale again in July last year, at which time [the council indicated it might be prepared to change the zoning](#) if it was presented with a compelling plan.

Despite the withdrawal from sale indicating such a plan may be afoot, the Warrnambool City Council told Bluestone that it has not received a submission for the zoning to be changed.

The 2.3ha site was owned by Geelong businessman **Ian Ballis**, who developed the Mill Markets, but has been under administration since July 2012 as part of his company, Daramking.

Administrator **Ken Sellers**, from SellersMuldoonBenton, is handling the affairs of Daramking, but was unavailable for comment.



The former owner of the Fletcher Jones site, Ian Ballis, who developed the Mill Markets before going into receivership in 2012. Image: Jeremy Lee, ABC Radio. Click on the image to hear Jeremy's story from 2008.

[box] Bluestone Magazine is part of a [growing grassroots campaign](#) to save the best of the Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool from being lost through neglect. We support a sensitive development of the site that respects its social and physical history and preserves the iconic gardens and silver ball for future generations.[/box]



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It started with two eggs: the story of Pip



By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] T
[/dropcap]o some people, the destiny of a sand plover sitting on a nest probably doesn't mean all that much, but *Bluestone* supporters are different to most people.

We know this because of how they – perhaps including you –

responded to our efforts to protect one small plover that had made the decision to nest in dry sand about 150 metres from the Hopkins River bridge, right where fishermen, walkers and plenty of energetic, beach-excited dogs like to roam.

In fact I was roaming when my big clodhopper shoe nearly wiped out the two speckled eggs that were so well camouflaged as to be almost invisible. (Mama bird was nowhere to be seen at the time: she had probably popped to the shops).

Thinking the eggs were abandoned, I admired them and moved on.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] T
[/dropcap]he next day, however, I was roaming again (I do that a lot, in the mornings) and Mama bird was draped over the eggs like a woman wearing a feathery ball gown: and so the quest to protect "Pip" and her eggs began.

We thought this would involve no more than a visit to Parks Victoria who would be able to protect the nest by roping off the area and banging a few signs into the sand, just as we had seen at other coastal nesting sites around Victoria.

But unfortunately Pip's GPS was off.

If she had nested on the actual foreshore, another 750 metres away, she would have been in the domain of Parks Victoria. Instead, she was in a sort of no-birds-land that, upon investigation, was found to be managed by the local council.

The council, unfortunately, was up to its neck with other things – things obviously much bigger than Pip – and was unable to respond with the haste that we had hoped.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] W
[/dropcap]hile we waited for the cavalry to arrive, we made our own signs – from whatever we could find – and rigged up a very non-convincing fence using bits of old rope.

Days ticked by, during which *Bluestone* began to post “Pip” updates on its [Facebook](#) page and hundreds of people began to

follow our progress, or lack thereof.

As the days turned into more than a week, we checked our fence and our signs and were constantly amazed that, despite some horrendous weather, both continued to hold.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] W
[/dropcap] were also constantly amazed by how many of our readers wanted to know how Pip was faring – she was fast turning into a minor celebrity (although without an agent).

Last Wednesday – 13 days after Pip’s nest was first discovered – the council was finally able to stake out her nesting zone with string and wooden posts, and erect two serious-looking signs.

We have no doubt that the [Bluestone FB page](#) helped that to happen and just in time, as on Sunday (yesterday) the river

was packed with people and dogs enjoying the first day of Summer.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"]S[/dropcap]omething else happened over the weekend too.

Our first Pip-ette.

The second, we have no doubt, is not far behind and both Pip and her partner (Pat?) are sharing the nesting and chick-watching responsibilities.

Thankyou Bluestone supporters – we have made a small but important difference.



The 'Bluestone baby' – between Mum and Dad – shortly after hatching at the weekend.

[box] Unlike many young birds, sand plovers are self-sufficient from the moment they leave the egg. They are not fed directly by their parents, but collect their own food (under the protective eye of Mum or Dad) and spend most of their time hiding in the sand dunes until they are old enough to borrow the car keys.[/box]

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