
THE AUSTRALIAN

Luna Park operator Multiplex in court over 'blinding lights'



Jerry and Mary Ryan at their home overlooking Lavender Bay. Picture: James Croucher

EAN HIGGINS THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM January 26, 2017

First it was the “Hair Raiser”, an allegedly unlawfully installed ride that elevates strong-hearted visitors to Sydney’s Luna Park alarmingly high up a column as they dangle in the air, before dropping them down screaming, their fall arrested just before hitting the ground.

Then it was the “Freak Out”, a ride brought in about a year ago where customers were hurled around a rotating pendulum as hundreds of strong strobe-like lights dazzled the local area.

The “Power Surge” followed, in which visitors with particularly strong stomachs paid good money to get twisted up, down, around and upside down, again with so many strong pulsing lights they could power several discotheques.

For Ireland-born construction company operator Jerry Ryan, who with wife Mary owns a house overlooking Lavender Bay and Luna Park, enough was enough — the lights from the rides were driving him and his neighbours mad at night.

“It got that bad that we couldn’t sit on our own veranda because of the intrusion of these lights across the water,” Mr Ryan told *The Australian*.

“You’ve got flashing strobe lights so strong that you can’t look at your wife or your sibling. You’d be blinded.”

Mr Ryan launched a legal and lobbying battle to — as he saw it — make the operator of Luna Park, Brookfield Multiplex, respect planning restrictions and lease agreements with the state government covering the prime 3ha harbourside crown land site.

Nearly a decade on from when it signed a long-term lease agreement with the government, Multiplex has still not met a clause requiring it to landscape a clifftop section into a public park.

Multiplex lodged a retrospective development application to build the Hair Raiser after locals complained; at one point authorities threatened to order it to be dismantled, but eventually gave it a reprieve.

Multiplex said the Hair Raiser was a ride, not a structure, and so did not need a DA.

A Multiplex spokeswoman would not comment on either of those disputes, but said the clifftop area would soon start being landscaped following a new deal with the state government.

The government has refused to make the deal public.

As to the lights, the government in the name of Planning Minister Rob Stokes decided to take a stand, issuing the company a compliance order claiming it may not be honouring its development consent restricting the amount of “light spill”.

Multiplex engaged a team of legal eagles to take Mr Stokes to the Land and Environment Court seeking orders that it be declared

“void and of no effect”, and that the government pay Multiplex’s costs.

Former corporate lawyer Ian Mutton, who has led a series of resident group battles against Multiplex over Luna Park, says it is typical of the company. “Seems to me that any problem with the lights could be fixed with a screwdriver and a ladder,” Mr Mutton told *The Australian*.

“It’s insane — a simple request to check to see if there is a problem is met with a stampede to the courthouse.”

Multiplex’s spokeswoman said: “When the minister’s office informed us that some neighbours had complained about lighting (not all of which is from Luna Park), we consulted with an independent expert lighting specialist and we are now seeking an order from the NSW Land and Environment Court.”

The case is due to return to court next month, where it is shaping up as a ding-dong battle unless it can be solved through negotiation, with a meeting between the parties understood to be scheduled for tomorrow.

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