

## The real McCloy at last

By Jeff Corbett

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Few who rely on the media for their image of developer Jeff McCloy will know him as other than Lake Macquarie's bogeyman.

The bogeyman image has been promoted for years by a succession of prominent Labor Party people who opposition to his every major development is so inevitable that it appears at times to be personal.

Their message seldom wavers from this sentence in a parliamentary speech by the Member for Shortland, Jill Hall, in November 2000: "Mr McCloy has a sorry record when it comes to the development and working with the community."

It would be interesting to ask the thousands of people who have been pleased to be able to buy the product of Mr McCloy's developments whether success is a sorry one.

Unerringly these Labor leaders paint Jeff McCloy as a bully, and not without, I think, occasional justification. Mr McCloy appears to see no reason why his wealth and power should tie his hands in a dispute with anyone of greater or lesser means.

But whether you see Mr McCloy as a bully or a hard bastard will depend on which side you're on. I'm on record, in a 1997 column about his dispute with a plumbing supplier, as describing him as both. (He and I have had our own long-lasting disputes over my writing of him and his companies but this didn't seem to offend him!)

But there is another, less public side of Jeff McCloy that could not be in greater contrast to his public reputation.

The first example of this contrasting side that I encountered came by way of a phone call two years ago from a person associated with Lakeside Special School.

This person told me how a school fund-raiser selling raffle tickets at Jeff McCloy's Tavern had asked Mr McCloy for advice on how the school could raise money more quickly. For some years the school had been raising money to buy a bus that could carry children in wheelchairs, but as the fund grew so did the price of the bus.

Mr McCloy wrote a cheque for the outstanding \$39,000.

I also happen to know of his considerable generosity to the Hunter Orthopaedic School at Waratah and his students.

His donations that I've learnt of over the past few days as I prepared this column cover a surprisingly wide range of organisations. They include \$500 to Our Lady's Nurses Men's Committee Appeal for the poor; \$100,000 this year to the Variety Children's Charity for the provision of a special swing for disabled children in Maitland park and to help disadvantaged children in the Hunter; a \$14,000 buggy to help and Aboriginal training group set up Yamuloong Bush Tucker Tours; \$20,000 a year for the past three years to the Salvation Army; \$100,00 this month to Woodville School of Arts,

\$100,000 for a new gym at Redhead Surf Life Saving Club and (over the years) six surfboats; two blocks of Newcastle land as site for government-funded homes with people with cerebral palsy.

Mr McCloy says part of his motivation in making such donations is that he'd rather ensure that the money went to a good cause than to a wasteful government. By that Mr McCloy is referring to the fact that some of his donations are tax deductible so part of the donation is redirected tax (the other part, of course, is redirected from his own pocket).

"I don't want anyone thinking I'm soft, because I'm not," he told me yesterday, "The softest thing about me is my teeth."

Now, I've written about this other side of developer Jeff McCloy because I learnt this week that two weeks ago he committed \$1 million to Newcastle University.

The money is to be spent on a research program that will be determined in talks between Mr McCloy and the university, and two possibilities raised by the university so far are the aged and the environment.

You see, I like the contrast between the ALP's portrayal of Jeff McCloy as a poor corporate citizen and the reality.