



Beach dream

IN the past 12 months, the Smiths Beach project near Yallingup has been embroiled in controversy because of environmental concerns and questions surrounding the involvement of lobbyists Brian Burke and Julian Grill.

But behind the scenes is a man who says he is passionate about real estate and the South-West.

David McKenzie, chairman of Canal Rocks Ltd and principal of Olifents Real Estate in Claremont, has fond childhood memories of visiting the Yallingup and Dunsborough area with his family.

In the mid-80s he bought a block and built a holiday home in Yallingup for his family.

It was while he was building that he was approached by the owner of the Smiths Point property to see whether he would like to purchase it.

As a real estate agent and former quantity surveyor, he could see the potential of the land, but could not afford to buy on his own.

So he formed a syndicate of 27 to help fund the project.

He said despite the controversial commentary on the development, 26 of the initial 27 people who were interested in backing the project in

1985 were still involved.

With the assistance of specialists, the group intends to build a world-class development offering a range of accommodation, from budget backpackers and camping to a luxury resort, so that anyone on any budget can enjoy the South-West.

Of the controversy surrounding the project, Mr McKenzie is quick to note that gossip is not part of his nature.

"In more than 30 years of being involved in the real estate sector, I have dealt with a number of high-profile people and properties and I am pleased to say that I still do, but I am a firm believer in respecting client confidentiality," he said.

— BRONWYN FRAZER

