

HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT FROM BEROWRA COMMUNITY FORUM

Prepared by:



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BEROWRA COMMUNITY FORUM

LOCATION: Berowra RSL

DATE: Thursday 31st May

TIME: 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

FORUM SUMMARY

Berowra residents were advised of the Forum date and venue via:

- Posters distributed around the Berowra area
- Print advertising – Hornsby Advocate and The Bush Telegraph
- May E-newsletter - sent to 35k
- Website
- Facebook posts - plus Facebook event created

Councillors were provided with additional posters to share with their networks if they chose to do so.

The Mayor and six Councillors representing different wards attended and approximately 60 residents also attended. Forty one community members registered before the Forum, and many of these participants identified their key concerns.

The Mayor opened the Forum and each of the Councillors introduced themselves. The Mayor explained that this Forum was one of several the Council was holding so that Councillors could be provided with the information that would enable them to govern for everyone across the Shire. He explained that Councillors wanted to meet as many community members as possible and to hear their ideas and current concerns.

Mayor Ruddock emphasised that these Forums were not intended to solve problems, but rather they were for Councillors to hear concerns and ideas directly from the community and to address these issues and ideas as effectively as possible - where Council was able to do so - through its strategic planning processes.

At the conclusion of the Forum participants were encouraged to continue to present their views to Council/Councillors. Several Councillors supported this suggestion and explained to participants what channels of communication they used to engage with community members. They encouraged participants to contact them directly via their mobile phone, and/or through Facebook.

CONCERNS/IDEAS RAISED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. North Connex and the Quarry

Several residents identified the dust and the noise of the trucks carrying fill from the North Connex to the Quarry as an ongoing and disturbing issue.

Of particular concern was:

- Dust which prevented them from opening apartment windows
- Not able to run the air conditioner

- The noise from the constant movement of trucks (60 trucks per hour with special dispensation to use compression braking in built up areas)
- Bright lights shining into apartments day and night
- Quality of life has been diminished
- No indication of when the Nth Connex will be completed and the trucks cease
- Construction goes on until 10pm which means it is impossible to go outside at all (back gardens look out onto the quarry)
- Children can't study and have to go to the library to prepare for exams.

Council response

- Council is very aware of this issue; however this Council (and previous Councils) had no say in the situation with the Quarry. Council was left with the problem; nevertheless the site must be remediated for safety reasons - especially for the homes around the area.
- When remediated it will be for community use
- It is anticipated that the North Connex will be completed in late 2019 and the road will again return to its normal usage patterns.

2. Retail space in Berowra

- There is too much unused retail space – it looks ugly and uncared for.
- Why not build town houses in that area?

Council response

- Agreement. There is lots of vacant retail space. Unfortunately an anchor tenant was lost, however a gym has recently opened there and that has been a positive. There is no rezoning on the table for that area at the moment – however if anyone wanted to bring a proposal forward Council would be happy to consider it.

3. Rural land and subdivision

- There were considerable differences between community members (especially, although not only, residents living in Dural, Galston, Arcadia, Glenorie and Cherrybrook) on the issue of rural land (green belt) and subdivisions in Ward A.
- Diverse issues included the following:
 - Further subdivision will result in cluster developments (Warren Park development cited)
 - Concern about developers waiting to 'come in' as soon as larger acreage is subdivided
 - The biggest issue with respect to subdivision is infrastructure - especially road networks (Old Northern Road and New Line Rd cited). Smaller blocks will mean big increases in population, what proposals does Council have to build the road network to support that population increase?
 - Subdivision will lead to road congestion
 - It's not only about roads- infrastructure (e.g. open green spaces, public transport) should always be planned before development
 - Need to take into account what and where SEPP 5 allows and does not allow particular kinds of development (State Environmental Planning Policy No 5— Housing for Older People or People with a Disability).

- Council needs to refer to the GSC (Greater Sydney Commission) in terms of where development should or should not occur
- We need to preserve green urban areas – they are important environmentally – especially tree canopy
- Some families who have held larger areas of land would like to be able to subdivide their land.

Council response

Council acknowledged the complexity of this situation and its commitment to pursuing an independent approach – taking into account the GSC and other planning instruments and requirements.

4. Libraries

- Library services are delivered from 5 different locations
- Several locations need a significant upgrade (especially Galston and Berowra)
- Libraries are now very different places to what they once were. They are now community centres that offer many different activities e.g. activities for young children, research facilities, areas for study and work, meeting places for community groups, free IT access for those on limited incomes etc.
- Council needs to upgrade its libraries and have one major library collection that can service all other collections across the Shire
- Ward A does not have enough library space – what is council intending to do about this – especially about library use
- How realistic is it to have a Shire-wide library service given Council's current deficit?
- Council need to be much more careful about where it decides to spend money (Equestrian Centre cited)
- Is there any evidence that libraries are under –used. That's what is often said but is there any evidence?

Council response

Council is aware of the increasing change in the usage and the importance of libraries. There is a Shire-wide Library Plan but it is difficult with budget limitations and timing issues to fully implement that Plan.

5. Berowra Pool

This was another longstanding issue. Both the community and the Councillors representing Ward A have different views about the need for a pool at Berowra.

Those in support of the pool cited:

- The length of time that the need for a pool at Berowra had been on the agenda of several previous Councils at Hornsby
- The distance that the population in Berowra had to travel (into Hornsby) to access a pool, both for training and for therapeutic use.

Those against the pool's construction cited:

- Running costs - especially the amount of subsidy Council would need to provide.

- Other pools that had opened in the area, and that have succeeded - a Berowra pool would drain profits from these pools
- This area already has the highest incidence of backyard pool ownership in Australia

6. Parking around Berowra railway station

- There is need for a multilevel car park on both sides of Berowra station

Council response.

Council recognises what a difficult situation parking is across the Shire - not only in Berowra – and is currently exploring ways in which space can be ‘freed up’ for local residents.

7. Ongoing community engagement

Progress on greater community engagement/communication strategy (ward community forums a great start - what else/next?).

8. Parking of Council trucks and equipment in residential areas

Against Council policies, garbage and other large council trucks, as well as storage of concrete pipes parked in residential areas and blocking clear passage (Berry Park cited). Council has been notified several times but no action has been taken.

Council response

Council made a commitment to follow up on these issues.

9. Historic memorial plaques around Berowra combined with history walking fitness trails

Why could this not be developed? It would improve the environment, increase knowledge of the history of the area, contribute to social engagement and provide easily accessible opportunities for people to exercise.

Council response

Considered a positive idea and taken on notice by Council.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES AND IDEAS IDENTIFIED BY THOSE WHO REGISTERED PRIOR TO THE FORUM BUT WHICH WERE NOT DISCUSSED AT THE FORUM¹

- Maintenance and repair of Council playgrounds (e.g. Oxley Park reserve there are big cracks on the ground, and the rubbery-asphalt material is broken up in some areas which presents a child-safety and environmental concern).
- Progress of sunshade installation at all Council playgrounds.
- Progress of lobbying NSW Government re disabled access at stations (besides Hawkesbury River Station) - what about Mt Colah, Mt Kuring-gai, etc.
- Overdevelopment
- Pedestrian crossing at Hornsby Station Westside
- Sidewalks in Hornsby
- Mt. Kuring- gai Oval as a time share for off-leash dogs
- Kerbing, guttering, trees and a neighbour –bring home garbage and using home as a recycling plant!

¹ This may have been because people who identified those issues on registration felt they would automatically be discussed at the Forum even if they did not attend.