

# Fairy Bower Precinct

MAY 2017 NEWSLETTER

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**3RD MAY >**

**NEXT FAIRY BOWER COMMUNITY FORUM MEETING:**

Wednesday 3rd May 2017, 7pm, St. Patricks College.



The official party of **General Manager Mark Ferguson, Lieutenant Colonel Jacqueline Costello, former Manly Mayor Jean Hay AM, student Emily Wong and Reverend Graham Perry** at the 11am Manly ANZAC day ceremony on 25th April 2017. This ceremony was well attended by the public and maintained the high standard set by previous Manly Council run ANZAC day events.

**Welcome to All Fairy Bower Residents**

## NEWS

### ***Manly2015 to Continue***

The Council meeting last Wednesday night was a mixed meeting as regards outcomes for the Manly Community. The good news is that the new Council will complete the repaving of Whistler Street and Central Avenue to join Sydney Road, the Corso and Raglan Streets. However once again there are some issues involving a lack of due process by Council and lack of public consultation.

For example the area around the Whistler Street car park is to be skipped, there are currently no plans for Council to submit a DA or to consult the general public (nor any public domains expert committee) for any fine tuning of the external architects concept designs, and there was no detailed mention in the report of the funding source for the works. (Should come from Manly Town Centre Improvement

### **The May Meeting will include:-**

- ◆ **Fairy Bower Pool Update**
- ◆ **Planned 3 hour Free Parking Withdrawal**
- ◆ **Golf Course Conversions**
- ◆ **General Business**

Rates Levy). The issue of skipping the paving around the Whistler Street Car Park could be perceived as an indication the new council plans to allow private redevelopment of this site, regardless of public opinion in Manly.

The apparent reluctance of the Council to decisively terminate the Whistler Street triangle proposal (despite the General Manager being

advised of probity issues between Built Athas and senior Manly Council management), potentially leaves this developer-lead scheme once again in a "parked" status, like it was in the lead up to the 2012 Council elections.

Only the Chamber of Commerce and Hello Manly (related to the Chamber as it is run by Manly Centre Management) have been re-consulted on this planned re-paving and while the report tries to justify this by noting the general public consultation on *Manly2015*, back then much of the detail was overshadowed by the car parks controversy.

So there may be a battle required to regain the traditional Manly style of public engagement. This issue flows into other decisions taken at this meeting on Manly matters, which some may see as a loss of amenity for Manly residents, as they remove existing Community benefits.

### **Goodbye to Shorelink inter-library network**

The next item was the new Council is to give notice that Manly Library intends to withdraw from the Shorelink inter-



**The Mosman Library Computerized Catalogue circa 1985.** Manly Library originally had the same equipment, which was supplied by NCR. When the Shorelink network commenced operation in 1984 it was the largest library computer network in Australia. (Image Mosman Council)

library network service. Manly has been part of this since the network was established by deed in 1983. It included Manly, Mosman, North Sydney, Willoughby and Lane Cove Councils. Last year it cost the Council \$74,000 for its share of operating costs, and beyond the unified cataloguing, shared internet services, databases and eResources (books and magazines etc.), it resulted in Manly Residents borrowing 1436 items from libraries outside Manly.

I think most of us would recognize that setting up such an inter-network in the 1980s was visionary (long before the public internet existed) and it showed how Manly Council had an outward focus to improve services to its residents. Contrast this with the current Council decision to save the money and inwardly focus on just libraries in Manly, Dee Why and Mona Vale - with clearly nowhere near the level of resources of the Shorelink network. Is Manly now also to enter the insular peninsular?

Probably around 600 Manly Library users could lose access to a wider network of inter-library loans from July 2018.



To misquote a famous ad, **Manly Resident Card? Yes, that will do nicely...** Possibly the last card ever issued - are these smartcards soon to just end up as memorabilia?

(After the 12 month required notice period expires.) These inter-library borrowing users tend to be those completing studies or older residents. However the report to Council contained no consideration of the community and demographic impact of this decision. There was also to be no public consultation on the Administrator's decision to give notice to withdraw from this network.

### Plans to end Residents' 3 hour free parking

The next item was the decision to close down the Manly Resident Card 3-hour free parking scheme. This card was originally introduced to make Manly an attractive shopping destination for residents, given other major nearby shopping centres such as Stockland Balgowlah and Warringah Mall offer 3 hours free parking.

The aim is to now revert to only allow a maximum of two hours free to residents and non-residents at all four Manly Council car parks. The first step of the closure was suspending any further issue of cards under the scheme. The scheme was then to be placed "under review" for 6 months, with plans to then withdraw all the cards.

At the last ex-councillor LRC meeting I accidentally found that ending this scheme was on the agenda of the following Council meeting, so I immediately ordered what was perhaps to be the last Manly Resident Card to be issued.

However it was not easy - all mention of the card had long ago been removed from the Manly Council web site, suggesting a long-standing intention to withdraw it without consultation. A check of the Internet Archive revealed it had been removed around September 2016. After recovery work I started both an on-line and paper application for a card. The latter was successful, with an attractive hologrammed teal blue card arriving in the post on the day of the meeting.

The staff report to the meeting indicated 1600 cards had been issued, but this appeared inconsistent with reports Manly Councillors had previously received of 2600 cards being issued following commencement of the scheme in early 2013. Similarly I have sighted cards with high and low serial numbers and yet the final card received was numbered 6699 - again suggesting rather more than 1600 cards had been issued. So the question then becomes how many of the issued cards are in regular use, and do they have a significant cost to Council?

The staff report claimed a loss of \$57,791 in revenue due to use of the cards between July and December 2016. The time given free by the cards - either up to 30 or 60 minutes beyond the first two hours, saved the resident \$9.50 or \$12.50 per stay. So this figure suggests about 6000 to 9000 hours are given away "free" per year via this card. However the (say) \$100,000 "loss of revenue" of this is insignificant (2%) in Council's total Manly annual CBD car parking income of around \$4.5 million dollars per year.

Similarly if the cards are abolished many people will just park for a shorter period of time to avoid any fee, or find somewhere else to park or shop. I would thus estimate the real cost is less than 1% of parking revenue. This is obviously negligible, but even when presented with this at



the meeting, neither the staff nor the Administrator would back down on their plans to start the card shutdown.

Although framed as a service equalization measure, this decision also raises the possibility that the Council budget has become very tight, due to the costs of amalgamation during the period of restructuring. This may explain issues such as overdue repairs to Manly Council buildings not being done, deterioration in Corso and CBD cleansing and capital works such as the Fairy Bower pool being postponed or backed out of.

Some Fairy Bower residents have previously asked if the amalgamation has turned three financially healthy Councils into one financially stretched Council. Staff are reporting some reductions in Manly services budget figures for next year (2017-21). With Council rates still fixed, the only way to check for any service level reductions within the former Manly LGA is to get hold of the actual new Council combined financial plan document, and compare proposed budgets with figures from the Manly 2016-20 documents. The question is, will this information be made publicly available?

### Meetings and Community Feedback

At various Council meetings many of us have been surprised to see the Administrator subtly or directly criticize groups and individuals that appear to publicly dissent from Council's planned actions. Often without giving them any right of reply. While it is certainly not common, it has happened on quite a number of occasions. For example the Mona Vale place plan rally organizers were publicly accused by the administrator of misrepresenting the plan in their meeting flyer.

Similarly the Swimming Groups that resisted the imposition of lane fees at the Manly Swim Centre were given a public serve when the Administrator announced the application of these would be deferred for another year. A member of the public, Mr Brian Halstead, was criticized when he prepared to make a public address at a Council meeting at Mona Vale, after the administrator became aware he was a member of the Save Our Councils Coalition (an anti-amalgamation group) and it was even suggested that he not be listened to.

Roll forward to last Wednesday's meeting: A couple who I know as regular (non-Fairy Bower) constituents have a problem construction on the boundary of their property. This is stopping them building their new house. The matter stems from Manly Council not impartially and decisively resolving the issues previously. The couple had hoped the amalgamation would offer a new possibility to get the matter solved by getting fresh minds of different Council staff to review the matter and finally sort it out.

However despite applications to meet with senior staff or the Administrator, their formal access has been very limited, and they are naturally incredibly frustrated, with the wife now also pregnant. However with a bit of creativity she managed to get to speak at Wednesday's pre-meeting "public forum" on their Council issues. I was seated at the front and being well aware of their issues I just added out loud this matter needs the attention of the General Manager and the



The oval indicates the previous location of the missing **Warren Langley** bespoke glass artwork in the Manly Council Chambers foyer. This was removed because it inconveniently contains the Manly Council shield logo. As can be seen a variety of cheap plastic signs have now been affixed in the entry area. Jean Hay and I made representations to the General Manager for reinstatement of the glass artwork, but we have not been successful so far. The glass has now been sent to the Art Gallery to keep it safe.

Administrator. However this produced a threatening rebuke from the Administrator.

After the meeting closed I went up to the Administrator to attempt to explain the history of the matter to him, but before I could say a word, there was a torrent of angry verbal abuse from him that was well witnessed. In summary he dislikes receiving any public complaints and objected to me making any representations on behalf of constituents.



In the hallway outside the Manly Council Chamber on the first floor there is a **chronological gallery of Manly's Mayors from incorporation in 1877 up to the present day**. It was created under Mayor Brian Hamer, based on extensive research by Manly Library staff with framing by a local firm, paid out his Mayoral Allowance. Many Manly staff became aware of plans by the new Council to remove all these portraits, so I made strong representations to the General Manager that these are now integral to the building's history and should remain. Apparently a heritage consultant to Council also thought they should be left and so plans to remove them have been suspended.

In local government a big part of the role is listening to the community and being prepared to adjust your position or actions to better meet community expectations. Later in the week I tried to resolve the apparent conflict by formally suggesting a constructive list of Manly Community issues (from minor to major) that the Administrator could address to improve the new Council's standing in our local community (and remove the need for public airing, which he apparently dislikes).

I was surprised when he advised he was not prepared to discuss it - citing he did not see it was the role of ex-Councillor LRC members to make such "demanding" submissions to him. He also indicated he had seen the polling of the Manly electorate that apparently identified amalgamation was not a big issue, so no action was required.

So for now we have four months left before we find out if a new elected Council takes serious interest in our local concerns.

### Golf Club Wars

One policy change that came about with the creation of the Northern Beaches Council was the concept of cheaply providing more playing fields for organized sport by not renewing golf course leases on public land. This came about after the Administrator was approached by the head of the Sporting Union to review a claimed shortage of sports fields.

Readers may think that is a just a matter former Warringah residents and members of the Warringah Golf Club (located in the District Park at North Manly). However Balgowlah Golf course is in the firing line as one of the 7 leased courses in the Manly-Warringah-Pittwater area, with an expired lease in holdover since 31st October 2015.

Initially a Council report was released in August 2016, after considerable public consultation, with a proposal to renew the District Park lease (including golf greens) for 20 years. Then in September this was placed on hold for consideration of converting half or all the Warringah club

greens to sports fields. In November, with mounting community discontent, even (then) Premier Mike Baird requested the Administrator leave the decision on the future of ratepayer owned assets to an elected Council. In February 2017 the Warringah club was given a two year lease extension. Three weeks ago, surprisingly on the day of the Manly by-election, the Council publicized the release of the sports field discussion report for public consultation. The report contains a strong almost campaign element to support the conversion of the Warringah Club greens.

However more strategic issues may well need to be considered. For example, is more housing development appropriate if there are insufficient amenities like sports fields to service the new residents? Are section 94 contributions (developer payment towards to civic infrastructure) adequate if the Council claims it can't afford to buy more land for such things (e.g. from the intensification of the Dee Why Town Centre)?

Are we rushing in short-sightedly to claim some golf greens are surplus due to declining membership, only to end up with a similar disaster in 25 years time, to that which is now unfolding with insufficient schools and capacity, after many were closed and sold as government asset sales, on the basis of declining enrolments in the early 1990s?

So read the Council reports and the Warringah Golf club's paper, and make a submission. I suspect many residents point of view will depend if they more regularly use sports fields or golf greens or neither. Manly style would be enlarging the cake (e.g. at Ingleside and Terry Hills), rather than have sports squabbling over the size of the pieces, but its up to the community.

***So want to meet new people and get involved in community matters? Come and join us 3rd May 7:00pm at the ICMS (St Patricks College).***

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### Need Help?

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