

Fairy Bower Precinct

NOVEMBER 2016 NEWSLETTER

www.fairybowerprecinct.info

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2ND NOVEMBER >

NEXT FAIRY BOWER COMMUNITY FORUM MEETING:

Wednesday 2nd November 2016, 7pm, St. Patricks College.



Our permanent local reminder of 60s modernity - the over-tall **Manly National Building**, viewed from Central Avenue. Is this sort of high-rise the new face of affordable housing? Could this idea be just property development sophistry? After the aesthetic disaster of the high-rise intensification of the Dee Why CBD, why is the Northern Beaches Council apparently advocating 6 storey high-rise zones for parts of the currently 2-storey Mona Vale CBD?

Welcome to All Fairy Bower Residents

NEWS

Fairy Bower Pool

Many of you will have noticed some remedial work has been carried out on the Fairy Bower Pool following our last

The November Meeting will include:-

- ◆ Pool Update
- ◆ Oceanides Sculpture update
- ◆ Northern Beaches Council "Place Plans" - is "vibrant" code for more high-rise?)
- ◆ Deferred Park and Community say items
- ◆ Spit Tramway Walk

Precinct meeting.

Last month, for the second time in the Precinct's history, we spent a whole meeting reviewing the pool project in detail, with staff member Andrew Davies present - Council's Executive Manager, Urban Infrastructure. (The last time we did this was 8th October 2007!)

In discussion it emerged that senior Council staff considered the tender prices they had received for the works were too high. It also emerged the scope of work covered by the tender was for replacement of the whole pool bottom, not just the lower half as the Precinct had requested. The financial risk of additional unexpected remediation works was also of concern to staff (sealing voids under the floor when it was opened). Lastly staff also had concerns whether the floor works would be able to be completed before the school holidays started at the end of December.

From the community's perspective, the Northern Beaches Council community consultation was somewhat disappointing. It resulted in answers that did not suit the Council, that appeared to get ignored. The community wanted works commenced immediately to replace only half the bottom that was not on solid rock.

So the remediation works that were carried out are to make the pool safer for the summer season and the floor works are to be re-scoped and re-tendered (or maybe done with in-house with Pittwater staff, who are used to doing ocean pool works).

The staff are now planning a works commencement date in early April 2017, after the Summer season is over.

I have concerns from many years on Council that a Councillor sponsored, approved and funded project,



Oceanides by the pool, basking in the summer sun in 2008. (Virginia Munro)

deferred to the 4th quarter of the financial year, can indicate staff don't intend to carry out the works. Based on this and other matters raised by residents, I therefore asked the General Manager *Mark Ferguson* at the last LRC (ex Councillor) meeting whether the amalgamation was causing Council any financial difficulties. He indicated that all of the new Council's capital works projects would be carried out.

So I will continue to liaise with staff about the project to keep you all informed. On behalf of you all I express my thanks to Mr Andrew Davies for taking the time to meet with us. Also thanks to Robyn Hall and the other precinct members who have attended our various pool meetings.

Oceanides Sculpture Restoration Fundraising

As you would have seen in Friday's *Manly Daily*, the restoration project is gaining more publicity with former Manly Councillors Candy Bingham and Cathy Griffin now supporting our community's efforts to restore this iconic ceramic sculpture work. As previously noted the aim is to replicate the now damaged work in more durable bronze.

I am liaising between Helen Leete (sculptor), Clive Calder (Director of Australian Bronze foundry at North Head who can make the replacement) and Council staff Michael Hedger (Art Gallery Director) and Mick Darda.

Clive Calder requested I write to Council to seek formal approval for the recreated work to be able to be re-installed at the existing location. This was required before we commenced our fundraising campaign.

The matter also came up in the public forum at the last Northern Beaches Council meeting held in the Manly Council Chambers on Tuesday night. Candy Bingham spoke in support of the project to the Administrator, staff, former Councillors (including myself) and public that were present.

A follow up by the *Manly Daily* reporter Robbie Patterson indicates the Administrator has, on behalf of Council, made an offer to match, dollar for dollar, the funds we can raise from public donations to a limit of \$40,000.

I had written to Council on the basis we would not expect them to contribute financially. That is, we would try to raise the funds just with public support. Thus the new support from Council is both unexpected and very generous, but still means we have plenty of work to do to fund-raise \$40,000 to \$50,000.



The Delmege building in Bungan Street, within the Mona Vale CBD. This is Mona Vale's equivalent of the *Manly National Building*. It is a six-storey building that proved incredibly controversial and unpopular. Its approval became one of the factors leading to the Wran government sacking Warringah Council in 1985. However the building proved a catalyst for public opinion that eventually led to the formation of Pittwater Council on 1st May 1992 (www.realcommercial.com.au)

Our next step is to set up the crowd funding site and request pledges from all who want to see this iconic work restored for posterity.

It would be a great result for all of us to achieve this and everyone's support is welcome no matter how big or small.

Six-Storey high-rise "place plan" for Mona Vale.

Currently the Northern Beaches Council has out on public display for comment a *draft place plan for Mona Vale*. One of the more controversial aspects of this is to raise the height limit of their CBD from two to six storeys, at the Pittwater Road end.

It must be acknowledged we do have a broad mixture of development intensity in Fairy Bower. We have a mixture of attractive heritage bungalows, walk up flats, four blocks of high-rise flats and some very large modern houses. However I think most people would agree that development needs to be appropriate to the location and meet community expectations.

The approval by Warringah Council of the six-storey Delmege Building in Mona Vale in the mid-1980s was one of the issues that resulted in Warringah Council being dismissed in 1985 and ultimately led to the Pittwater area seceding from Warringah in 1992.

Knowing this history, means it would appear to be politically courageous for a draft proposal to now allow buildings to the same six-storey height. One must wonder if history has been forgotten. As an experienced former Councillor, the first thing that flashes up when this sort of proposal appears, is who owns the subject land and what links do they have into Council and possibly relevant State government planning agencies? Has the Council or State agencies (possibly pushing the Council) been lobbied by developers or their industry group *the Property Council of Australia*?

At the Council meeting of 27th September, where the draft plan was approved to be put on display, it was stated that six stories was apparently needed to provide an incentive to ensure redevelopment occurred. Last Thursday we saw an article promoting this "place plan" that will allow longer late night trading for bars, clubs and restaurants in Mona Vale.

From direct experience with my constituents in the Manly CBD, there are significant management issues in mixed commercial and residential buildings that contain licensed premises. Think of amplified music noise and kitchen exhaust fumes from bars and restaurants, causing nuisance to residents within these buildings. Remember also the risks of late night alcohol violence that Manly has had to manage.

The view has been expressed that the draft Mona Vale



Most of Manly's premium public streets like the Corso and Sydney Road feature two to four-storey buildings with little overshadowing and the sky easily visible.

"place plan" has the hallmarks of the Manly 2015 car park proposals. *That is, is it a "solution" benefiting narrow interests in search of a community "problem"?*

Housing affordability is certainly a real issue in Sydney. In the 1950s and 1980s it took around three years of average earnings to buy a median priced house in Sydney. Such house prices are currently reported to be 5.5 to 7 times current average earnings.

Depending on where you look, there are many factors at work. The starting point is obviously low interest rates and insufficient land releases for housing, compared to Sydney's population growth.

Some commentators note the taxation treatment for property investors (e.g. negative gearing and favourable capital gains regime) together with the presence of overseas buyers, is enabling owner-occupier buyers to be outbid in the housing market. See:-

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/whos-to-blame-for-rising-house-prices-we-are-actually-20161025-gsamj2.html>

Other commentators note that when you look closely at the housing demographics the pent-up demand is for houses, not flats (and particularly not for small 60m2 flats), as when couples have children, they seek a house and they don't leave the house after the children grow up. See:- <http://www.smh.com.au/cqstatic/gknufy/HousingAffordabilityCrisisInSydneyandMelbourneNovember2015.pdf>

So to improve housing affordability in the Northern Beaches, do we need more houses (not shop-top flats) and to remove non-owner-occupiers from the housing market?

Another issue is that, reportedly, no net additional social housing has been built by the government for the last 20 years. In November 2015 the Family and Community services waiting list was 59,000, representing a typical



Imagine the traffic jams if Fairy Bower was intensified with many more high-rise buildings like these...

accommodation wait time of 4 years!

The main concern with the draft Mona Vale proposal is that a similar "place plan" could be done for any CBD up and down the Northern Beaches. The key elements seem to be significant intensification of building density (heights) in the CBD areas, but arguably presented as a Trojan-horse package, to somehow appear attractive to the public.

Would we want Balgowlah and Seaforth draft "place plans" to make these centres "more vibrant" but allowing six-storey buildings? Would we accept a draft Manly CBD "place plan" claiming to improve housing affordability by increasing maximum floor space ratios from 5:1 to 10:1?

Remember the protest about the Leighton's proposed redevelopment of Manly Council's Wentworth Street property, with a high rise tower in the 1980s? From experience, the public is more likely to object to a specific development proposal than a change in planning rules.

By doing such planning intensification piecemeal within a large regional Council, it is harder for the public to organize a wide campaign to successfully oppose such changes that reduce local amenity.

This brings us to the Fairy Bower Precinct - a microcosm of Sydney as regards housing mix. The key problem of any increase in density here is road congestion in and out of the Eastern Hill - as we all regularly know too well.

So other than aesthetics, the movement of people becomes the key limitation on development density. *So to prevent loss of amenity do we need to force the State Government to significantly upgrade public transport infrastructure, before our community accepts any increases in development density?* Read the *Mona Vale Draft Place Plan* via our precinct web site *Home* page. Submissions close Sunday 13th November at 5pm.

More next month...

So want to meet new people and get involved in community matters? Come and join us 2nd November 7:00pm at the ICMS (St Patricks College).

Hugh Burns 0435 407 257 hughburns@y7mail.com

**DON'T FORGET OCEAN CARE DAY FESTIVAL
Sunday Dec 4, 10am to 4pm, Ocean Beach**

Need Help?

Council Rangers: 9976 1633

Manly Police: 9976 8099

Cabbage Tree Bay Issues

Fisheries: 8437 4903

24/7 Fishers Watch hotline: 1800 043 536

Sydney Water Odour Complaints

<http://sniffandsubmit.com/>

Sydney Water Complaints: 132 090



Jake and his team are currently selling a number of "off market" properties on the Eastern Hill and the local Manly area. If you would like an appraisal on your property or would like more information on the off market opportunities please contact Jake and his team on the numbers listed below.

Kate Blackett
M 0402 939 925

Morgan Fahey
M 0408 666 110

Jake Rowe
M 0414 612 546

Nathan Tse
M 0411 386 455

McGrath