

Wagstaffe to Killcare Community Association Inc.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2018-19

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which we meet and pay my respects to the Elders past and present.

Many things remain the same as in the last year. And some of our challenges remain. I have been checking some of the Minutes for 2010, and find that concerns were expressed about the speed limit for the Peninsula, in the hope that a 40 kph limit would be imposed as in Mosman, that we had flagged that we might need to pay for a Hall organiser, and there were concerns about mangroves in the creek. So while progress is made, it takes time and constant attention, and most things take longer than we would hope. And it needs of course, the cooperation of many people and many organisations: as Weber said, 'Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards. It takes both passion and perspective'.

The Hall continues to operate successfully, with a full range of regular activities during the week, and weekend celebrations and community group activities taking place. However overall rentals are down. The tennis court continues to be well used and well-tended by its regular players headed by Bob Eddington, and takings are up. Talking Turkey continues to appear each month, delivered by all those many people behind the scenes walking the streets so it can be delivered. Our two main community events, the Australia Day breakfast and the Easter Saturday Trash and Treasure fund raising continue with success, with fewer people attending the Australia Day breakfast on this our second go-it-alone event with much warm community feeling but no Council support. And Trash and Treasure continues to unearth a multiplicity of items to be sold and the remainder disposed of afterwards, but helping to reduce the number of goods going to landfill and allowing recycling to take place, though with much wear and tear on some of us as we age! The June and September long weekend art shows continue to delight, and to raise funds for us and the other sponsors, and volunteers work diligently to bring all of these events to fruition. Other community groups such as the Bouddi Society and its Foundation for the Arts continue to hold successful events, delighting audiences with their presentations and the skills available in this small area. We look forward to ongoing use of the Hall for these community purposes, and hope that an even wider array of events can be put on in future. However, there are some battles which remain.

We need to have further discussions on the approach to Australia Day, now we no longer have Council financial support yet many of the costs for this derive from Council. We have been lucky with generous donations being made (\$850 this year) and these are very much appreciated. But do we ask for a gold coin donation for the breakfast, or do we pay for the breakfast out of WTKCA funds? Or do we make application for Council funds? I for one do not think it appropriate to go through bureaucratic hoops for something which is an annual event. I'd rather that the Council made a policy decision to waive its fees, and nor do I think it appropriate that hard earned Association funds be used to provide a free breakfast. I'd rather have donations to defray our costs, with any left-over going to one of our other volunteer organisations for whom we collect each year (and this year we raised \$385 for the P&C in addition to their collection, but after the donations, the cost to us was still \$837). But this is a matter for the future Committee to consider.

We also need to be careful with Council's facilities review, to ensure that onerous charges are not placed upon us for the Hall licence, that they do not impose a restricted range of licence fees which significantly affect what we need to charge community groups for their use of the Hall, or require us to add expensive facilities. The Hall services us all, and in my view it would be a retrograde step to consider it as a commercial undertaking. And with all of us getting older, we may yet have to consider paying someone in the future for some of the Hall management – again, an issue for the future Committee when and if we do not have a willing volunteer to carry out this task. But one thing is clear: the Hall was built by volunteer labour, its upgrades have been paid for by the community, and volunteers work long and hard to maintain it. It should not be considered as a commercial entity by Council.

Progress on some of our projects remains slow and frustrating. Endless negotiations have continued with National Parks to try to upgrade the Half Tide Rocks track, as we have the funds available. However the

Department has remained unresponsive, and approaches to the politicians are now being tried. The informal track continues to degrade. Similarly we have had bureaucratic frustrations with the amalgamated Council and our previously approved Turo Park extension upgrades, as following an initial positive response to our requests, progress has stalled. However, discussions continue with Council officers on the need for sandstone multi-purpose blocks, infill and prevention of flooding, the footbridge over Turo creek, and sculptures. This will be pursued in the coming year, and we hope that we will be successful in having some carved sculptures there, and elsewhere in the Peninsula, so that we can end up with our own sculpture walk.

Discussions with Council continue on a range of matters. Meetings and letters have produced little response to the long-term challenges facing residents in Hawke Head Drive and Albert Street, who do not receive garbage services. To date the Council has failed to require the contracted service to provide a small garbage truck that can service these areas, and again, this will continue to be pursued. This is a matter of Council policy which should be simple in my view, but Council seems impervious to community needs. Similarly we continue to have ongoing battles in our attempts to retain our local low key, friendly, bush and beach aware community standards when developments occur. With growing developments and the building on previously unbuilt blocks, it is inevitable that tree cover (and hence bird and animal habitats) are reduced. While some of this is inevitable, it appears that many people who are attracted to this area may not be aware of the community standards, and new houses may reflect a more suburban than the past low scale approach. Moreover, the amalgamated Council staff may reflect the more liberal approaches of the former Wyong Council and height and boundary changes may result. The Council is preparing new combined approaches to the very large Council area it now oversees. The Association remains concerned that our local needs will be swamped in this rush to centralisation and uniformity of planning approaches. We have proposed that the character statements be retained, and that a separate chapter with our planning requirements be used for clarity, similar to the one used in the past by Gosford for Pearl Beach. Similar concerns are felt with regard to the destruction of trees and having clarity of approach so that large trees are not removed without a qualified assessment of whether they pose any risk. Again, this will need to be pursued with vigour by the incoming Committee.

The Peninsula awaits also the development of improved mobile reception, but the slow process (we started major lobbying work in 2014) to build the required tower is now underway. It remains to be seen whether the single tower approach will solve our problems, so again an issue to be monitored. The issue of jet skis remains, as does that of mountain bikes using tracks and creating tracks in the National Park. Again, these are issues on which opinion can be sharply divided between the users and those affected by them, but if jet skis are to be banned from National Park, a concentrated campaign at the State level will be required. However, there is some good news. We provided support to the Bouddi Society scholarship winner Alyse Faith to help her with her London expenses, and our energetic bushcare volunteers continue their labours under Toni Trent each Monday afternoon. And with the marvellous work of Ken Tough and Julie Ho, a wonderfully crafted seat was suitably launched on 10 December in memory of Tom Jackson and all his work, with Ann and other members of his family present.

We continued our liaison with the others supporting the improvements to the Hardy's Bay waterfront, and are optimistic that some progress will actually be made in this coming year! However, concerns remain with the overall planning system, and moves to uniformity. Submissions were made on the proposed LEP, the former COSS lands still need to be protected, and large tree destruction remains rampant. Again this will be an issue for the incoming Committee to pursue. And one of the sagas of the last year, the long colourbond fence on Wards Hill Road, continues as despite the Council not approving the fence, an appeal had already been lodged in December to the Land and Environment Court. But the hearing date is not until 11 September, given Court pressures, so keep tuned. But this is an issue of principle, of what should happen when no DA is lodged and one is required, and how Council then responds. So this has some months to run.

The other long running issue during 2018 was the absence of the ferry service and the need for dredging. Following much lobbying, in which we played a part as I moved the initial motion requiring all sides of Council to come together to realise that action and funding was required (Mike Allsop now chairs a community group for ongoing monitoring). The ferry services resumed on 19 November. But this was not

before a lot of individual turmoil and disruption, and the loss of jobs and businesses affected by the ferry absence.

So what of the future? I am stepping down, in the hope that we can encourage new and younger members to step up and work with us to protect our special area. I would like to pay tribute to all the committee members over the years who have worked hard to protect and improve the services in this area, but none of us own any of this (apart from our own homes of course). It is ours to be shared and protected. This year I have been walking along the Putty Beach, marvelling at the sands and waves which approach and then retreat, stirring up sand in their crests at times, at other times being of a beautiful azure tint. And no matter what happens, the tide rolls in and out. So we committee members are a bit like that. We vary in tone and size, but we too roll in and out, and in my view we need an injection of new blood, new ideas, new visions. We share a solid core, but one which needs shaking up at times. So I would like to thank the committee members for their support, thank all of those who turn up to our events, who work behind the scenes, and all those people who have expressed their appreciation to me for my part in this. It encourages us to try harder: some comments though are likely to deflate and deter volunteers. And we may need to look at a review of our Constitution, to update and simplify it if possible, and to clearly outline our vision. But let the future be one in which we welcome newcomers to our shores and those who make this Bouddi Peninsula their home. We should encourage tolerance and respect, recognition of the past, including the Aboriginal past, while maintaining key values and principles. We want this to continue to be a beautiful, inclusive, welcoming, nurturing, sustainable and collaborative community.

So some final words. We live in a delightful area with an interesting mix of people – full-timers and part-timers, working families and retirees, children and teenagers, and of course lots of holidaymakers. The streetscape may change as vacant lots are filled and holiday shacks give way to more substantial houses, but the beaches, the water and the national park remain to delight us all. Our governing changes too, as Gosford Council gives way to the new Central Coast Council, which is more bureaucratic and less attentive to the distinctive needs of Wagstaffe to Killcare. So the Association has to be active in identifying and asserting our local needs. We have to make sure that we are representing all segments of the community, especially its younger and time-poor members who may find it difficult to get to meetings and be reluctant to put themselves forward. And we have to be proactive rather than just reactive, being alert to the concerns of relevant outsiders, and making the needs of our community part of their agendas. In this way, we can make sure that the vibrant local spirit that we see on Australia Day is reflected in the governing of our community life and our surroundings. Good luck!

Peta Colebatch, President, 13 May 2019



