



2009 President's Report

“Those who do not remember history are doomed to repeat it” - George Santayana (not the guitarist)

If Local Community Action (LCA) was a science I think we would have concluded by now that a necessary though not always sufficient condition for getting things done is for:

- (a) The whole local community to have a relatively united front and agreement
- (b) To understand the processes and priorities of relevant external bodies (e.g. local council)
- (c) To align (a) with (b) and communicate that fact in the most effective way possible

Unfortunately, with the exception of some everyday inconveniences, life in the Offshore communities is generally too good and our normal busy lives too demanding for large numbers of community members to be continually passionately motivated in a united front to fight for local issues. Of course, we respond very effectively if threatened - witness for example the 1994 Fires, Currawong and the previous threats to loose parking at Church Point, but generally the mass energy and interest dissipates quickly.

An alternative, though a usually less effective replacement for (a) above, is the persistence, over a long period of time, by a few “champions” to further a local cause. These people need our thanks and acknowledgement!

The local issues that affect us (and their champions) are mirrored in the SIRA project teams:

Project Group	Team Leader	Where I think we are at:
Scotland Island Sustainability Vision	Greg Roberts	A few meetings held and sections of a plan based around the Pittwater 2020 Plan have been drafted
Roads & Drainage	Anne Palmer	The Draft Plan for Roads and Drainage will shortly be coming to the whole community. A key issue is whether to sell some unused “road reserves” to fund some of the proposed works
Parks & Reserves	Lisa MacDonald	We have a plan to do a detailed management plan for each reserve
Water & Sewerage (including Emergency Water Supply)	Cass Gye	Unresolved question as to what the majority of the community wants - local solutions or mains. If the latter, then with sufficient lobbying we could get mains within the next 5 years. The “Emergency Water Supply” is being well maintained and continuously improved.
Waste Disposal	Cass Gye	Has required continuous behind the scenes work and still needs more lateral thinking. This is where most of our rates go!
Church Point	Ian Souter	Waiting for Council to make their next move regarding the Draft Plan of Management for CP
Wharves, Boats & Marine Issues	Kerry Borthwick	Blame has been attributed to local community differences for lack of action – the reality being lack of money
Fire Issue & Liaison with SIRFB	Tim Byrne Geoff Leeson	As per the <i>SI Bushfire Management Plan</i> SIRA has worked with RFS and Council to prepare for next fire seasons (e.g. recent whole Island visit). In particular we need to further develop and utilise the newly created local Precinct Groups.
Community Vehicle Island Vehicles	Kerry Borthwick	Community Vehicle service working well and most Island Vehicles registered. Trying to re-obtain special RTA status for Island to allow cheaper rego of “golf buggy” type vehicles

Community Hall Management	Kerry Borthwick	SIRA has taken over the management of the Hall from Council. Usage for local community activities is significantly increasing
Kindy Liaison	Jon Hazelwood	The Kindy is thriving, but still needs ongoing support from the whole community to preserve this excellent service
I.T. & Communications	Lisa MacDonald	The new website is coming, including the electronic version of the new Pittwater Offshore Directory (POD)
Finance & Insurance	Roger Corrie	SIRA has a very healthy balance sheet and (as well as we can understand) all required and necessary insurance coverage
Community Events & Internal PR	Lisa MacDonald	We can get posters printed and distributed; group emails & PON communication arranged and sent in a few days if needed. Refreshments etc on the day are a bonus
Membership	Cass Gye	We have probably the most up-to-date database of any fully voluntary community group in the world – takes a lot of time!
Media & External PR	Karin Krueger	Everyone should have a professional PR company on call
Pittwater Offshore Directory (POD)	Deryn Vokins	After much voluntary work the new POD is almost ready for printing and distribution to every household

Most of the above Projects have team members as well as a “team leader”. I do not have the space to list all their names, but I thank them all. **If you think you can constructively contribute to any of the above please contact the team leader. You don’t have to be a committee member to contribute to these issues.**

It is very difficult to make headway on all these issues with volunteer time only. I have previously suggested that the community hold a meeting to choose one issue a year and then persevere as a whole until that issue is satisfactorily resolved. Of course, the challenge is that almost all of the above issues require ongoing attention be it ever so minor and, as famously said by General George Marshall, “the price of peace is eternal vigilance”, that is it is necessary to be always vigilant on several fronts.

There is another impediment to getting things done. As said above, local and state governments are influenced by a united community sentiment, but unfortunately some people avoid meetings because they say that they do not like argument and controversy, which makes obtaining such united agreement very difficult. It is true that conflict resolution and negotiation skills are hard won and something which I think should be more effectively taught in school. In this regard our courthouses and parliaments are not good role models, based as they are on adversarial argument with winners and losers. Our common pattern of forcefully presenting a point of view to win a debate needs to be subsumed into a broader and more socially intelligent pattern of clearly and calmly expressing our varying views, as a sub-component to a more primary task of thinking creatively to design effective solutions to local problems that, as far as possible, encompass our varying viewpoints.

Critical thinking is a great skill, but if your only tool is a hammer everything looks like a nail. Let me encourage you to participate more in community discussion and community action this year and bring at least two additional tools with you - creative design focused thinking with an ability to listen and where possible encompass the views of others in your solutions.

**Bill Gye
June, 2009**