

SIRA AGM President's Report 2015

In the past 12 months there has been much talk and some practical outcomes.

There are two short videos produced by Boyd Attewell that are on our website. In these series of brief interviews of a number of Islanders, Boyd asks [what is one thing you would like to keep on the Island](#) and [what is one thing you would like to change](#). Five issues stand out: *We like the community spirit and natural environment, but want to fix Church Point Parking, Waste Water and the Roads and Drainage.*

So let me briefly focus on these.



Church Point: The CP POM is still on track, though the train is slow.

- A special NSW Government low interest rate (LIRS) has been received, that saves about \$1M to \$1.5M on the project.
- A Review of Environmental Factors will shortly be reported to Council. No draft yet available.
- During the year SIRA and WPCA had joint meetings with the Bayview Church Point Residents Association and Church Point Friends to determine issues of common ground and three joint letters were submitted.
- An independent 'Demand Management' report is nearing completion and the final report will be reported to Council. Again no draft available yet.
- There will be a major Council meeting sometime in March/April for Council to receive and consider all of the above reports which is when some final decisions will be made. Depending upon the outcome of that decision there will most probably be a call for tenders for construction in 2015-16. **We will again need to call upon the community, hopefully for the last time, to attend that meeting.**
- Our major challenges this year are:
 1. Ensuring that at the March/April meeting Council does not back down at the last minute on its December 2013 decision;
 2. Negotiating to ensure that Council does not seek to raise our CP fees above the minimum necessary to carry out the work;
 3. Continuing to lobby for some degree of exclusivity so we may preserve the advantage we gain from additional infrastructure.

Waste Water: We are awaiting a draft submission from IPART

- I do want to thank all those community members who submitted letters.
- I will highlight the fact that there will be an important Public Forum scheduled for March 30 where IPART will present their findings about whether Sydney water will have any obligation to provide sewerage to Scotland Island. We need to have a strong presence there. The key decision will be made by politicians and they, of course, are influenced by community pressure.
- All we are trying to do is get the option back on the table which may not be the best metaphor when talking about sewerage!

Roads & Drainage: The Masterplan is continuing to be implemented, but with a minimal annual budget the progress is slow.

- There have been some capital and maintenance works, progress on a traffic management plan, and we have just received \$20K grant funds through the Community Building Program (thanks to Rob Stokes) for some specific Island pathway improvements - see the report for details.
- As with all these issues, if you have an interest get involved. We need people with skills and a "can do" attitude to help Council, or indeed ourselves, to obtain additional funding from State Government grants and to improve where we are on Council's budget priority list.

- The “hairpin” bend leading to the top of the Island is case in point. It stands on a knife edge between when or if Council will do something, or a ‘don’t ask questions’ do-it-yourself job.

Community Services: The Community Vehicle, Emergency Water and Community Hall, I am glad to report they are going well. Again see reports for details and thanks to all involved.

Communication and Community Engagement: The team has been busy this year (again see report). There have been many Island wide communiqués and two Community Forums and one Special General Meeting although the numbers were low but the enthusiasm high. Our website would be the envy of many small companies. Thanks to Hubert, CB and the team. We have had eight Subcommittees with several non-committee members participating; again while the numbers are low the enthusiasm is high. Every issue that we deal with comes through these Subcommittees and this is a great way to get involved without the full commitment of being a Committee member.

In terms of our Community Spirit, as well as fairs and fun things, it also is preserved and developed by the significant extent of altruistic community volunteering that takes place. In this regard, whilst it is a bit of a pain for some, it is my pleasure and duty to make some acknowledgements:

Thanks to this year’s Committee Members: VP Judy Readman; Secretary Carol Floyd (CB); Treasurer Cass Gye; Tim Turpin; David Hegarty; Shar Jones; Sharon Kinnison; Jenny Frazer; Hubert van Mierlo; Adrian Matthews; Tanya Costin and Shona Forsyth. There have been some challenges during the year and we did have two Committee resignations and I do want to thank Alan Gaines and Graeme Crayford for their many contributions during the year.

Thanks to many others such as our part-time bush regenerators for helping to preserve our environment and those involved in the Parks and Reserves Subcommittee; thanks to the Coordinators of CUG and TUG; thanks to those who help with the Waste Management and Shar Jones who, along with others, bravely seek to forge a long term vision for the Island. I want to thank Julian Muir for the PON (Pittwater Offshore Newsletter); Michal Chapman, our Public Officer; Deryn Vokins for accounting advice; and George Gaal our Auditor; Karin Krueger for PR support; Colin Batt for guidance on matters of insurance; Emmie Collins and others for our fairs and all our artists, musicians, the Island Players, yoga teachers, etc.; SIOCS for happy children; the Brigade and Community First Responders; Ian White, Pittwater Councillor as well as Brigade Captain. And also to Cass who I know in a thousand often invisible ways keeps the Island afloat.

So let me end with a moral tale...

There is a common challenge that community groups like ours face. A: To get things done needs discussion B: Discussion can bring out differences of opinion C: Differences of opinion can lead to emotion D. Emotion can lead to conflict E. People don’t like conflict, so nothing gets done.

To overcome this challenge, intervene at D (i.e. “Emotion leads to conflict”). What matters most are the rules of engagement. The price of peace is eternal manners. Without that you can struggle through conflict, but it’s not fun!

So I call on everybody in the community to observe polite discourse in word or letter including email and social media. Between unambiguously polite and unambiguously rude are 50 shades of grey. So unless you enjoy sadomasochistic communication, I urge you all to err on the side of unambiguously polite. That way we can get things done and still preserve our positive community spirit.

Bill Gye

February, 2015