RDE Catherine Park Bollard Update and Newcomers’ Welcome

Progress with Council in planning through to completion on ground works often spans quite a number of years. This has been true for the gazetting of the upper island road, the Traffic Management Plan as well as the bollards at Catherine Park. With the many structural and staff changes at Council SIRA has found it beneficial to keep records and follow up decisions to enable progress. Through collaboration and persistence SIRA has achieved many of the improvements to infrastructure we now enjoy.

The bollards at the bottom of Pitt View Street were placed about 15+ years ago to restrict vehicle access to the park about the time the stonewall below Pitt View Street was built by the community. A good deterrent until one buggy driver discovered they could squeeze through. Soon waterfront parking became routine for all. The grass path with a timber strip and seating along the waterfront became a road. The problem is Catherine Park is a park; it is not gazetted as a road or parking lot. The foreshore path must provide safe pedestrian access to a children's playground, a ferry, commuter parking and a recreational waterfront.

Due to increased complaints regarding the impact of buggies in the park on the environment and dangers to pedestrians David Munday of NBC did a survey in April 2018 as to community sentiment. The outcome showed the majority of people were in favour of restricted vehicle access. Following the consultation Mr Munday mapped and shared with SIRA the location of the bollards that would restrict access and allow for mobility parking. The delay in placement has come with the delay to the implementation of the Traffic Management Plan.

Under the Traffic Management Plan registered vehicles including buggies will be restricted to road access and private parking. Although fine for most persons, there is real need for parking for people with mobility issues. It was negotiated for dedicated mobility parking in front of the stone wall below Pitt View Street. An option for a 3 point turn is available using the space prior to the second wall.  As with other mobility parking areas on the mainland, persons using these sites will need to have the appropriate permit.

The problem remaining was how to assist those people that might need to drop off/pick up items arriving at Tennis Court Wharf. As the Council is planning to restore the timber retaining wall it was agreed that in 2020 should there be adequate funding, the budget might be stretched to restore and raise the stone wall on the foreshore just before the walkway out to Tennis Court Wharf. The Roads, Drainage and Environment subcommittee advocated for a small widening at the 90deg corner to allow a temporary vehicle drop off/pickup spot. Parking, however, will be restricted to the area below the fire shed for persons without a mobility sticker.

The work on the waterfront begins March or April and at that time as you can imagine access along the waterfront will be very restricted. The placement of the bollards has come as a first stage in preparation for the coming works and is a first step also in the implementation of the Traffic Management Plan.

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News Item 2 – To be updated in the future

A newcomers update to past and future initiatives for Catherine Park

Recreational facilities are limited on Scotland Island and Catherine Park is the largest available open space for use by all members of our community. SIRA has worked over many years to improve the amenities and the aesthetics. Our newer residents are often unaware of the changes that have occurred over many years. These include:

* Bushland restoration with blue gums – Warringah Council
* Steps on western slope to replace a very steep access road.
* Community centre built by the community - Warringah Council funded.
* 'Kindy' built by local tradesmen – Community fund raising with Council support.
* Foreshore playground and basketball area following extensive consultation to replace and augment existing amenities – Pittwater Council funded.
* Central swale for improved drainage
* Pitt View Street bollards to ensure pedestrian safety and access to the foreshore.
* Community built stone wall, edging along Pitt View Street and foreshore to improve amenity - 2002.
* Timber seating along the foreshore (sadly removed for vehicle access)
* Regeneration of the Eastern hillside ongoing under Bushcare since 2000
* Picnic table (replacing collapsed dray) and foreshore seat donated by local craftsman.
* Electric barbecue installed by Pittwater Council (funded 50:50 SIRA)
* Routine mowing of the parkland
* Rejuvenated Kindy playground and beds for community garden - Kindy grant 2018
* Handrails installed by NBC Council for safe access.
* Bush Regeneration by Council behind the Hall and Kindy ($5,000 SIRA contribution)

Despite the many improvements listed there remains issues to address.

* What was once a grassy pedestrian access and recreation area along the foreshore has deteriorated. The stone edging has collapsed and is in fact covered by water at the highest tides.
* The lower retain wall below Pitt View Street is collapsing.
* The western sea wall has deteriorated putting the bank at risk.
* The park surface is worn and compacted helped by the recent NBN trucks and machinery.
* The park landscaping has deteriorated, and invasive vines proliferated in the surrounding bushland.
* Stormwater flows and sedimentation are a problem for the waterfront, bay, and access to the commuter pontoon.
* Additional all-weather storage is needed for festival and recreational equipment.

As with many projects, achieving outcomes requires collaboration with the Council, takes time and money. Happily, for the Island community there is funding allocated for 2021 to restore the seawall and improve the foreshore edging in the vicinity of Pitt View Street. Although access to the foreshore walkway will be restricted the finished project will facilitate dedicated mobility parking, a drop down/pick up area for buggies and safe pedestrian access for recreation and pedestrian traffic.

Also, in 2021 there is an opportunity for our community to collaborate with Council to develop a park landscape plan to guide improvements and assist negotiations for yearly funding.